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# Life Review Process and the Self: A Quasi-ethnographic Study of the Elderly

Mark Allen Zappone

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**Life Review Process and the Self:  
A Quasi-ethnographic Study of the Elderly**

**by**

**Mark Allen Zappone**

**FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN LIBERAL  
STUDIES**

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**Advisors: Sheldon Solomon Ph.D. and Sandy Welter**

**Life Review Process and the Self:  
A Quasi-ethnographic Study of the Elderly**

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**Abstract:**

This research paper exposes the life review process and illuminates the subjective perspectives on the evolution of the self, via qualitative interviewing techniques/analysis, of six able-minded elderly people (i.e., three females and three males ranging from ninety to ninety five years old) in their natural settings. This quasi-ethnographic investigation is an idiographic, qualitative and brief case/cross-case study research approach with an inductive analysis that complements existing nomothetic, quantitative and deductive theories supporting the actual occurrence of the life review process by the elderly and its “self”-educational value. More specifically, in addition to exposing the life review phenomenon reflected in the life-span perspectives of the self from the viewpoint of the individuals interviewed, this study also reveals several of their *potential* psychological dynamics pertinent to selfhood: *self-evolution, self-defeatism, ideal/real self continuum, ego integrity versus ego despair, ego defense mechanisms, and self-actualization*. Furthermore, this research primarily focuses on elderly people who are institutionalized (i.e., in a nursing home), with one respondent still living fairly independently in the community—in order to have at least one sample to compare and contrast against the other interviews conducted in a local nursing home. Lastly, the provided life stories are rich with possible educational value, and they could potentially serve as a basis for subsequent, more broadly based, quantitative and nomothetic theories involving the life review process and its relation to the evolution of the self for the oldest of the old in nursing homes.

**Acknowledgements:**

I am currently employed as the director of psychological and social services for a local nursing home, which houses one hundred and twenty senior citizens. In this capacity, the life stories and evolution of one's identity (i.e., the self) for the many aged residents who live at the nursing home are continually told and re-told to me by the residents themselves. The strong propensity for nostalgia/reminiscence, life reflection and the relaying of meaningful correlations between life's past events and the development of one's unique self seem exclusively endemic to the elderly—at least in my daily vocational and personal experiences. Moreover, an initial and brief review of the research literature pertinent to this phenomenon revealed that many contemporary gerontology, psychology and sociology journals contain quantitative, nomothetic, and deductive studies regarding this so-called "life review" and how it depicts the evolution of the self for the elderly.

However, it appeared that the pertinent body of current research literature is nearly destitute of ethnographic studies employing a qualitative, idiographic and inductive approach towards exploring this alleged life review process and its connections to the evolution of the self for nursing home residents who are the oldest of the old (i.e., ninety years old or older). Furthermore, at that time I was concurrently searching for a worthy research project to culminate the theme of my graduate studies: the development of the self. Hence, a brainchild was developed, and an idea was born to conduct a handful of qualitative interviews regarding the life review process and the evolution of the self—from the viewpoint of the elderly—via convenience and theoretical sampling from the

local nursing home population where I am employed. In an attempt to offer novel contributions to the relative body of recent research, I decided that this research exploration would incorporate qualitative case/cross case studies, an idiographic approach, and an inductive investigation of the life review/self-evolution perspective of five able minded nursing home residents who are ninety years old or older. Although, as a last minute decision, I decided to interview at least one additional able-mind individual, ninety years old or older, and who was *not* in a nursing home and remained mostly independent—in order to compare and contrast this sample against the interviews conducted at the nursing home. It was extremely difficult to find even one individual who fit the required profile and who was approachable with regard to doing the interview; yet, one person did ultimately surface (and, unfortunately, *only* one person—otherwise, the results might have been more valid if there was a higher response rate).

Once the interviews were recorded in their natural settings—specific themes, patterns, and connections emerged from the respondents' comments (as this approach to theorizing was done with little to no preconceived notions, other than the alleged existence of the phenomenon in question: life review/life span self-depiction amongst the elderly in a nursing home). Subsequently, the analysis of the results and derived theories were compared to a second and more extensive contemporary literary review of the quantitative, nomothetic and deductive research relative to this project. I initiated this comparison, firstly, at the request of a research participant and, secondly, to see how the results/theories of my mostly qualitative and idiographic study compared with the more quantitative and nomothetic research. The comparison yielded some conflicting and some

agreeing results. However, the results derived from my mostly or quasi-ethnographic approach were modified only minimally by the uncovered outcomes from the other studies. The alterations to this paper as a whole dealt mainly with semantic changes in an attempt to utilize the primary nomenclature native to this area of research (e.g., life review, self-realization, ego integrity versus ego despair, ideal/real self, ego defense mechanisms, and self-defeatism). But, the conceptual notions, descriptions and potential explanations that resulted from the empirical data of my original research were changed very little by the minimal introduction of more renowned scientific wording and structure. Nonetheless, they were altered to some extent—hence, the name: “A ‘Quasi’-Ethnographic Study...”

Finally, I think it is critical to pay homage to my research participants. Words cannot describe how I am so very indebted to them. My appreciation, awe, enlightenment, education, humbleness and full gratitude is truly difficult to articulate—in actuality, it is ineffable. Yet, I feel compelled to at least make an attempt to express how each one of my participants touched my life. I would have never imagined that I could learn so much from simply having in-depth conversations about the lives of and with “old folks.” (In order to preserve confidentiality, the names listed below are slightly altered in comparison to each participant's real name.)

Ms. Granzaull, thank you for teaching me the true meaning of forgiveness, commitment, worldliness, tolerance and familial values—your life is so very admirable.

Ms. Lanieri, thank you for showing me the power of a smile, kind words, patience, peace

of mind, and enjoying the simple things in life—if I could emulate only a fraction of the warmth and friendliness you exude, I think I could be a much better man. Ms. Dogerty, thank you for reminding me of the power of humility, perseverance, an active mind, letting go and to truly laughing at myself—I will never, ever forget our enlightening conversations. Ms. Zeiblenz, thank you for your vast experience, self-discipline, accomplishments, intelligence, patience, and cogent words—I never would have imagined that I was about to have the most intellectual conversation of my young life (with a ninety year old man!). Mr. Weatherby, thank you for your adventures, thrill-seeking demeanor, exciting stories, candor, and consistently honest views on life—I will never allow my life to get boring because of my conversations with you: “Some people are so afraid of dying that they never truly begin to live.” Mr. Kirk, thank you for your undying altruistic ways, your morality, your work ethic, kindness, and your optimism—I have become less cynical about life and human nature because of you.

To one and all, from the bottom of my heart, I thank you and praise you for living such rich lives and sharing your stories with me. I have learned so much, became a better person and improved my quality of life because of my conversations with all of you. It is my hope that the readers of this paper will glean at least some of the benefits that I have from my conversations with each of you, and, as a result, have a renewed respect for the elderly as an enormous reservoir of experience from which we all can learn and grow.



### **Introduction:**

It appears that many individuals, if not all, in their golden years are often quite nostalgic and reminisce about years long past. Furthermore, the life stories and past events that relay a strong sense of self or identity are seemingly the ones that are consistently told and re-told by the aged. These occurrences—which appear almost exclusively endemic to the elderly—are apparently well documented within several nomothetic, quantitative studies relative to a deductive analysis of this so-called “life review” and its revelations about a life-time evolution of the self (Butler, 1963). However, the recent body of research literature (i.e., within the last five years) does not reflect any distinct idiographic, qualitative studies regarding an inductive analysis of the able-minded, institutionalized (i.e., in nursing homes) oldest of the old (i.e., ninety years old and beyond), and the alleged occurrence of the life review/life-span perspective of the self from a phenomenological standpoint.

The core of this paper reveals that a mostly inductive, ethnographic, case/cross-case and (ultimately) idiographic study does substantiate the actuality of the life review phenomenon within the utilized (small) sample of able-minded nursing home residents who are ninety years old or older. Moreover, the development of the self, as viewed retrospectively from the viewpoint of six able-minded and aged individuals, is seen as a continually evolving process and can potentially provide vast insight regarding certain psychological dynamics pertinent to the formulation of the self—i.e., the life review, self-evolution, the ideal/real self continuum, self-defeating behaviors, ego defense mechanisms, ego integrity versus ego despair, and self-actualization. In addition, the

summations of the interviews that lie herein serve as living and breathing testimony that the autobiographical history of the elderly provides an abundance of information that can yield extensive experience and vicarious learning for subsequent generations. Lastly, the results of the following study can provide a rich basis for more generalized quantitative, nomothetical and deductive theories regarding the life review process and the self.

The primary nomenclature delineated in this paper, as the wording for particularly pertinent concepts, is essential to comprehend for the reader to grasp the methodology, analysis and brief cross-analysis of the data (i.e., the interviews/analysis). Hence, the ***Background*** section provides some limited information regarding the definitions and relative history of the primary terms utilized in this paper. Subsequently, the overall methodology is thoroughly explained, followed by the summations of the interviews—including their individual analyses (i.e., result's segment), and then a brief cross-analysis of the data is provided (i.e., a discussions segment).

Finally, the paper ends with the conclusion, bibliography, and appendix—respectively. The conclusion, and the paper as a whole, is supplemented by the contents of the appendixes and bibliography, and the reviewing of each one is recommended in order to allow for more validity concerning this research project.

### **Background:**

Firstly, it is essential to define and relay the origins of the main phenomenon in question—what has been coined as the “*life review*” process amongst the elderly. The life review process was first labeled as such by R.N. Butler in 1963 (Butler, 1963). Butler defines the life review process as a way to provide a person with an avenue for complete integration of past experiences, which allows for the potential for adaptation and creating novel meaning in that person's life (Weiss, 1995). Furthermore, Butler asserts that the life review process is typical amongst older adults due to their heightened insight of their own mortality or a time in their life (i.e., being retired) that allows for a need for resolution of regrets and a wantonness to have meaning for their lived experiences (Butler, 1963).

"The personal sense and intrinsic meaning of the life cycle may be more clearly evaluated by those who have nearly completed it. The reconsideration of life experiences offers individuals an opportunity to reframe, revise and expand their understanding of their personal history, which directly affects their feelings...such spontaneous generated reviews are consistent with [Erik] Erikson's developmental theory" (Weiss, 1995, p. 164).

Erik Erikson's eight stages of psycho-social development are also, in part, discussed in the latter sections of this paper, namely his last theorized stage: ego integrity versus ego despair (see appendix G for the eight Eriksonian, psychosocial stages). However, one must first truly understand the meaning of the word “*ego*”, which is essential to thoroughly comprehend Erikson's eighth and final stage in his renowned developmental theory, as well as for understanding other segments of this paper (e.g., ego defense mechanisms and the definition of the self).

The word “ego” was first defined in a truly psychological sense, and remains mostly accepted as such, by the ever-popular Sigmund Freud---circa early twentieth century (Freud, 1920). The ego is one of three Freudian constructs of the mind: id, ego, and super-ego. Essentially, Freud sees the id as impulse driven (fight/flight, hunger, sexual needs, etc.), the super-ego as the instilled social values/inhibitions that demand that the id be kept in check and the ego as the awareness/reality based construct that serves as mediator between the other constructs and directs action from within out to the external world---i.e., the conscious self (Kline, 1984).

Erikson is often characterized as a neo-Freudian and ego psychologists mainly because of his departure, in part, from Freud’s psycho-analytic theories (Stevens, 1983). Freud was primarily focused on the id, not the ego, and he believed strongly in the influence of the first several years of life in the forming of one’s psyche---i.e., during the oral, anal, phallic, latent and genital stage (Kline, 1984). Erikson, on the other hand, believed in the importance of a healthy ego and how it developed over the courses of one’s life span; hence, his developmental theory was engineered accordingly (Stevens, 1983).

Erikson’s eighth and final stage in his developmental theory is the one of relevance to this paper: *ego integrity and ego despair*. Erikson was tentative to fully define ego integrity, but he did describe the attributes that an elderly person with ego integrity would possess. Typically, an aged person with ego integrity will reflect a demeanor of wisdom, peace of mind, and active concern for life while simultaneously having contentment/

acceptance about the wholeness of their life lived even in the face of their impending death (Stevens, 1983). Erikson's final stage dovetails nicely with his preceding developmental stage—generativity versus stagnation. In the second to last stage, usually during middle adulthood, the individual is challenged to contribute to the guiding of the next generation and the realizing of life-long goals. If generativity is accomplished, often this will preclude any correlating ego despair in the last years of life. In regards to ego despair, Erikson states:

“Integrity can balance the despair of the knowledge that a limited life is coming to a conscious conclusion, only such wholeness can transcend the petty disgust of feeling finished and passed by, and the despair of facing the period of relative helplessness which marks the end as it marked the beginning” (Erikson, 1977, p.110).

However, even though the life review process mentioned above is an integral mechanism to possibly allow for ego integrity and potentially thwart ego despair—it is commonly distorted, for better or for worse, by what are known as ego defense mechanisms.

The first fundamental *ego defense mechanism* was originated by Freud—i.e., repression. Subsequently, Freud's daughter “Anna” (also a psycho-analysis), developed several others, as she was not unlike Erikson and was more “ego” oriented with her theories (Monte, 1995). Today, there are several theorized ego defense mechanisms, for example: repression, suppression, denial, displacement, reaction formation, projection, sublimation, rationalization, transference, justifying, blaming, and intellectualizing (Monte, 1995). Essentially, ego defense mechanisms are ways in which we distort reality to some extent to minimize the anxiety for our own being/reality or ego. For example, if an individual did not get a promotion that was sought after, he/she might rationalize that it was not worth it because the pay increase does not equate with the increase in

responsibility; or, he/she really does like the position that they currently possess, and they don't want to really leave it. These examples of rationalizations are put forth so the person does not have to accept the upsetting, potential reality that he/she simply lost out to some one with better skills and/or qualifications. Ego defense mechanisms are problematic when one is trying to get in touch with their real self, as opposed to their ideal self, and they are often difficult for one to detect as they largely function on a subconscious level (Corey, 1996).

The question of *real self versus ideal self* has been discussed often in circles of humanistic psychology, namely by the late Carl Rogers (Bugental, Frasier, & Scheiderer, 2001). Furthermore, an individual's accurate understanding of their self (their real self) is theorized as essential for a content life. In other words, the more congruence between one's real self and ideal (or imagined) self the more happiness that individual is said to possess (Bugental, et al, 2001). However, before one proceeds with an analysis of this issue, it is essential to arrive at a working definition of the "self" itself—not only for the topic at hand, but also for this paper as a whole.

An accurate definition of the self has been a challenge for many areas of inquiry. Theologians, philosophers, psychologists, anthropologists, and sociologists have all made attempts at putting their finger on what the self actually is. However, this paper is not about the debate over the origins of the self, nor the details of the characteristics of the self argued by one discipline over another. Instead, this paper simply needs a working or operationalized definition of the self, and preferably one that is generally accepted.



For the sake of this paper, the *self* is simply defined as one's conscious, overall and intermeshed or holistic identity (i.e., physically [including genetics and gender], ethnically, culturally, psychologically religiously, historically, behaviorally, etc.), which a review of the pertinent literature indicates is acceptable as a working definition. Thus, it is at this juncture where it is necessary to revisit the question of the ideal self versus the actual self. In other words, one's perception of their self, and their actual identity (perhaps as perceived by others) can be diametrically opposed, especially when one has extremely active ego defense mechanisms—and this seems to occur for many individuals to varying degrees (Bugental, et al 2001). Yet, there are theories pertaining to the inherent drive towards self-actualization within all people.

The late Abraham Maslow, known as the founder of humanistic psychology, liked to use the term self-actualizing to connote this phenomenon as an ongoing process, which he believed is an inherent propulsion within all humans to reach their full/ideal self or potential (DeCarvalho, 1991). In order to operationalize or have self-actualization be measurable, Maslow delineated what he called *peak performances* and *peak experiences*, which are times of releasing dormant powers to their full capacity and episodes of extreme joy or ecstasy, respectively (Bugental, et al 2001). Furthermore, most humanistic psychologists assert that in order for *self-actualization* to occur, one's self-concept and actual self are as congruent as possible (Bugental, et al, 2001). Thus, it is not a far leap to hypothesize that any elderly person experiencing the life-review process would probably only possess genuinely objective and full ego integrity if there was also sincere self-

actualizing occurring. But, of course, there are obstacles—in addition to every day ego defense mechanisms.

"*Self-defeating behaviors*" is a phrase that has been around for decades, and its meaning is fairly self-evident: our own actions that get in the way of what we want to achieve for ourselves in life, for example: procrastination, tardiness, impatience, etc.—are all typical self-defeating behaviors (Pepper, 2001). Of course, there is always the potential that self-defeating behaviors are simply the symptoms of deeper, intrapsychic dynamics; however, this paper is *mostly* concerned with the superficial behavior(s) themselves which are seemingly self-defeating (to consistently go beyond that would transcend the scope and boundaries of this paper). A lifetime of self-defeating behaviors can, for obvious reasons, interfere with appropriate ego integrity during the latter years of one's life. Unfortunately, many people are not as aware and/or forthright about their self-defeating behaviors, which can prevent them from accurately reflecting on their "selves."

Another conceptual phrase that is often utilized in the in the results and discussion segments, pertains to the highly documented research phenomenon entitled: *The Hawthorne Effect*. This phenomenon was first documented as the result of observing the effects of such things as lighting and temperature on factory workers' performance (Babbie, 2001). The results were very surprising—heat and lighting did not appear to have statistically significant influence on work performance when the employees were being observed by the researchers. Ultimately, the researchers concluded that the mere presence of the researchers seem to cause increases in the employees productivity, almost



regardless of the heating and/or lighting conditions. Hence, in the following research project, the potential for any Hawthorne effect is carefully monitored and discussed, as respondents may have a propensity to discuss only positive past memories in order to portray themselves in a favorable fashion to the researcher.

The last term that this study necessitates a thorough understanding of, and probably one of the most significant, is one that the definition for it was conjured by this writer: ***self-evolution*** (there are other documented definitions of self-evolution, but this writer modified and augmented those definitions to create a new definition). Evolution, as defined by Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2001), is: "A theory that the various animals and plants have their origin in other preexisting [similar] types and that the distinctions are due to modifications in successive generations". Similar to evolution, ***self-evolution*** is the notion that the self is influenced by several dynamics that pre-date the actual conception of any person's existence (genealogy, social-historical forces, genetics, ethnicity, cultural norms/mores, socioeconomic dynamics, etc.), and the changes that occur (or evolve) to the self, subsequent to birth, do so as a result of an alchemy of pre-conceptional/conceptional dynamics and the generational influences of that time over the course of a life span. Furthermore, self-evolution implies a gradual and eventual unfolding of one's natural or inherent abilities, aptitudes and inclinations

As was previously stated, the bold and italicized terms defined in the preceding paragraphs are critical for grasping some of the fundamental observations in the proceeding study. Moreover, the reference page contained at the end of this paper is a

good source for recommended readings regarding any needed clarification for the nomenclature utilized in this research paper

### **Methods:**

The general methodology of this study essentially involves a quasi-ethnographic, case/cross-case study approach via qualitative interviews of six able-minded persons (ninety five years old and beyond) in their natural settings. One participant lives mostly independently at his home in the community, and five participants reside at a local nursing home (convenience and theoretical sampling were utilized [comprising of three males and three females], as well as certain screening criteria to exclude individuals with mental and/or emotional problems [see “steps” in the following paragraphs]). The overall approach is mainly an inductive and idiographic one, with regard to theorizing/hypothesizing, stemming from grounded theory method: "...an attempt to derive theories from an analysis of the patterns, themes, and common categories in observational data" (Babbie, 2001, p. 284). Hence, empirical observations are crucial to the results and discussion segments of this paper. Furthermore, an ethno-methodological approach has been utilized when interpreting some of the data—an attempt to understand how the participants make sense out of their perceptions of the world, via challenging certain norms and/or mores, within the very context of the interviews themselves (Babbie, 2001). The proceeding paragraphs outline the specific steps taken to complete this research project.

***Step one*** involved firmly establishing the phenomenon to be studied via the direct observation of the life review/self-depiction process in the oldest of the old (ninety and beyond) in a local nursing home, and, subsequently, conducting a brief review of the pertinent research literature recently published (i.e., within the last five years). ***Step two***

involved determining where the pertinent and contemporary research literature had a gap, and then setting out to complete a research project that potentially fills that gap—i.e., a current, ethnographic, qualitative, idiographic case/cross-case approach to inductively study this seemingly high propensity amongst the (mostly) institutionalized oldest of the old (ninety years old and beyond) to reminisce/be nostalgic about their life/self.

*Step three* involved developing a multi-phasic questionnaire, which elicits responses about several major areas of the respondent's past life, to utilize as a general guideline for interviewing six individuals (three males and three females), that were able-minded and ninety years old or beyond (six respondents seemed to be substantial and realistic enough, in relation to the parameters set for this research paper—fifty to one hundred pages). Initially, a Likert scale response system was devised, but this proved to be more conducive for a quantitative study (Babbie, 2001). Hence, a questionnaire was created that allows for more guided, open-ended responses about one's life stories/life-span (subjective) perspective of the self and an overall qualitative approach. *Step four* involved developing an informed consent form to be signed by all research participants (please see appendix for a copy of the questionnaire and informed consent form).

*Step five* involved developing a sample population. As was previously mentioned, a combination of theoretical and convenience sampling (Babbie, 2001) were utilized for obvious reasons. Hence, a list was generated of approximately a dozen individuals who resided at a local nursing home and were seemingly able-minded enough (and willing) to partake in the interview process. A narrowing down of the twelve people to five people

was the result of discussions with the nursing staff (and, in some occasions, family members), medical chart reviews and/or, ultimately, conducting cognitive and psychological screenings under the tutelage of a licensed psychologist (see appendix for utilized screening tools). Individuals were excluded from the study because of, generally, a combination of reasons: cognitive decrements (e.g., periods of confusion/disorientation, recent and/or remote memory impairment, possible Alzheimer's disease, senile degeneration, or dementia due to some other etiology), evidence of psychological/psychiatric symptomatology (e.g., history of or signs/symptoms of mood disorders, anxiety problems, and/or psychotropic usage [e.g., anti-depressants, anxiolytics, anti-psychotics, and/or cognitive medications---exelon, aricept, etc.]) and/or psycho-social issues (e.g., history of abuse, relationship issues, and/or behavioral problems). The one participant that resides independently in the community was also thoroughly screened by several of the aforementioned processes, but with a heavy reliance on the mental health screening tools (see appendix) and third party information (i.e., neighbors and family members).

*Step six* involved, after obtaining informed consent signatures, conducting the interviews and tape recording and/or video taping the conversations that unfolded. This step also included employing ethno-methodology by paying attention to how the open-ended answers from the respondents were potentially influenced by the interview itself (i.e., conversational analysis/Hawthorne Effect [Babbie, 2001]). Furthermore, as the nostalgia was typically positive and full of happy memories, this researcher challenged that norm by attempting to elicit unpleasant events that were poignant in their memory

and, perhaps, highly influential with regards to the formulation of their “self” and/or self-defeating behaviors. This process also included memoing techniques (Babbie, 2001), so this writer could remember important insights gleaned during the interviews for later coding usage in this paper.

*Step seven* involved—after the manifest content of the interviews was recorded—conducting content analysis and uncovering any important semiotics and latent meaning (Babbie, 2001) within the recorded interviews. The main inquiries utilized in step seven, when looking for patterns to emerge from the recorded data, are taken from John and Lynn Lofland’s (1995) *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*: (1) What are things most frequently surfacing?, (2) What are the various magnitudes or levels?, (3) What are the various structures or types?, (4) What are the processes or orders noted?, (5) What are the possible causes?, and (6) What are the possible consequences of the observed phenomenon? However, the analyses of the interviews are not necessarily conducted in the same linear order that was just previously delineated.

*Step eight* involved the actual writing of the results and discussion segments, which essentially comprised of a summation of the interviews (briefly reflecting the respondent’s rich and learned life histories), an analysis of the individual case studies and, ultimately, a brief cross-case analysis (minor details were altered and the use of pseudonyms implemented in order to preserve confidentiality). *Step nine* involved a second and more extensive review of the pertinent body of research literature (see

bibliography), and making semantic changes that are more in accord with the nomenclature that is native to this particular area of research. Furthermore, some explanatory or causal statements were slightly modified and extended in the paper; hence, the name of this paper—"A *Quasi*-ethnographic study..." *Step ten* involved the final and cohesive writing of the preface, introduction, background, results, discussion, conclusion, bibliography and appendix, respectively.

### **Results:**

Due to the limited space and/or boundaries that were pre-determined for this paper, only the segments of the interviews that primarily reflect background information and relevance to the analysis of the data are presented. However, some additional colorful and educational information, regarding the participant's life stories, is provided—in order to reflect how each participant's life story is rich with substance and potential learning for subsequent generations.

#### **Mr. Zeiblenz** (Mr. Z.) is ninety two years old, a widower and of

Austrian descent. He was born in a small town “120 kilometers outside of Vienna”. Shortly after his birth, his family moved to Poland, and he resided there until he was thirty years old. A few months after his thirtieth birthday, he moved to the United States and soon after became an American citizen—“the happiest day” of his life. He resided in New York up until approximately ten years ago when he retired to Florida. His wife was American, and he had three sons by her. Mr. Z's wife died approximately seven years ago. For the past five years, he has resided alone in the assisted living facility (ALF), juxtaposed to the local nursing home.

Mr. Z is a tall and handsome man who wears glasses, but he looks many years younger than his stated age. His hair is short, fully white, and cut military style. He has no known health problems, except some mild and undetectable arthritis, and he exercises daily. He walks upright without any sign of infirmity, except for maybe his somewhat



slow pace—which appears more of a methodical and prudent approach than one due to an aged body. He speaks clearly, deliberately, and with a subtle Slavic accent.

Mr. Z appears highly intelligent, as this is reflected in his articulate words, vast knowledge, educational background (he has a Ph.D. in physics from Cornell University), impressive high-ranking military career and his ability to still fluently speak five languages. His memory seems to function without fail (almost photographic—to the most minute detail), and, remarkably, he does not even reflect a hint of age-related cognitive decrements. He is quick-witted, imaginative, and energetic. Furthermore, he is full of good humor and optimism without a sign or symptom of any mood and/or anxiety disorders (which the staff at the ALF confirm is consistent with when he is alone or in the company of others—negating any concern for the Hawthorne Effect). He also reflects an air of wisdom, and demonstrates his wise ways through the use of many metaphors and similes throughout the course of the interview.

Mr. Z's room has prints of art by Monet, Van Gogh, Rembrandt, Picasso, Escher, Kandinsky, Da Vinci and even one Dali, as well as one black and white photo of him in his military uniform with several medals and kissing the hand of "Bess" Truman (i.e., Elizabeth Truman—the first lady at that time of the photograph [circa World War II]). He also has an enormous globe next to an old oak desk, and the desk has several miscellaneous pieces of paper (including his daily journal he has kept for the last ten years—he says he is writing his memoirs for his kids and grand-children) and a lap top computer (he enjoys the internet, especially finding good chess players in his age range:

“Its rare, but I have found a few overseas”). In the far corner of his room is an antique player piano. He also showed-off his butterfly, plant and stamp collection. In addition, he has an impressive collection of philosophy, physics and botany books in his room, which he gave a brief synopsis of his favorite one’s (he is particular found of the existentialist philosophers: Sartre’, Camus, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche). He sates that he was never particularly religious, and he categorizes himself as an agnostic: “How can you prove or disprove God’s existence—you can’t, but it is important to have scruples so we all can get along”. He is fond of eastern philosophies/religions, especially Buddhism and Taoism, but he also enjoys reading the many moral precepts by Confucius. Lastly, in the last ten years he has written a handful of short stories about his life (non-published), as well as some poetry, which he shared during the interview. Mr. Z does truly seem like an intellectual renaissance man.

At the outset, Mr. Z. needed a little prompting with discussing his life story, as he was initially quite inquisitive, and he had many questions before the interviewing was to take place. However, once he began he became very enthusiastic and told his life-stories with incredible detail and delight, especially about his career in the military, which he asserts: "...brought me wealth in experience and in a monetary sense as well."

Mr. Z. is unusually patriotic and proud of his service to his country. He fled Poland during the Nazi invasion, and soon after became a captain of his own boat in the navy. He also adds how he was present at Normandy on D-day, and he is exceptionally proud of what he asserts is his biggest accomplishment—assisting in the design of the first nuclear powered submarine. His many medals are in a glass enclosure on the wall next to the

several bookcases. He said that he relishes daily his memories of his accomplishments in the armed services: "These memories remind me of my contribution in life, and lend meaning to my limited existence here on this planet."

Overall, Mr. Z. definitely appeared in great spirits, and truly content within himself, as he relays that he never feels alone, nor bored, as he says he has many things that bring him joy: his "old films from his life reeling in his mind" (especially his memorable contributions to the armed forces), his books, his hobbies, and satellite television (he "loves" CNN, C-Span, The Discovery and Travel Channel). He adds that he often has bi-weekly conversations with his one son who is a professor at Stanford in the engineering dept. He states that those conversations allow him a truly intellectual outlet with an actual "bright" human on a regular basis: "Without that, "I would probably go insane". He adds that he mostly listens, but his son always asks "his opinion" at the end of the conversation, and that allows him to truly draw on "my past experiences [usually from the military], and, hopefully, wise insights about life. My son is following my path in that—if you do what you love to do for a living, you will easily be good at it and make money as well." Mr. Z. is definitely a proud man about his past-life, and he is full of great humor, prudence, analytical/methodical ways, orderliness and perhaps possessing a genius intelligence quotient (IQ). It was an intellectual delight conversing with this logical, self-disciplined and, yet, spontaneously intelligent man.

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When analyzing the videotape of Mr. Z's interview, it was observed that, once his inquisitive mind was satisfied about the nature of the overall project, he reflected strong

life review and life span depiction of his self. However, he almost exclusively spoke of his military career/past, with occasionally mentioning his financial success tied to many years in the armed forces. To be exact, regarding frequency, he told thirty two stories about his past military life, six mini-stories about his exceptional “commission” or pay from the military and three stories about his sons. Everything else in his life, he mentioned only once or maybe twice. Mr. Z’s concentration on his career remained the focus of his verbiage even when, after this pattern became apparent, attempts were made to re-direct him about other potentially significant areas of his past life (e.g., asking him about his family history, friendships, etc.).

Furthermore, he spoke of his military with the most intensity, his current/past intellectual endeavors with the second most intensity, and his children with the third most intensity. The intensity levels were measured by tone of voice, posture, bodily gesturing, eye contact, affect, overall demeanor, number of descriptive words/detail and time spent on each topic.

In addition, the type of life review Mr.Z partook in was truly “self”-centered, with only a hint of potential altruism in its manifest content. In other words, the use of the pronouns *my*, *I*, *mine*, and *me* were used to a marked degree. Yet, *his* accomplishments were all done under the auspice of sacrifice for the "the motherland of all liberated, sovereign nations" (i.e., military service for the United States), but this was mostly implied and only overtly stated on two occasions. He also spoke of *his* current projects, interests/hobbies or intellectual endeavors that he had mostly been involved with most of

*his* life. Furthermore, Mr. Z. rarely mentioned concern for family, children, and friendships or even past colleagues.

A very plausible explanation for Mr.Z's self-centered focus throughout the interview may have something to do with his understanding regarding the teleology of this study. Comparatively speaking, Mr. Z's has high intelligence, which undoubtedly is what prompted him to ask so many questions about the nature of this study and, mainly, about the relevant purpose of the research itself before the interview commenced. Thus, as a result of the thorough pre-interview conversation with Mr. Z, he might have actually had more clarity than most that this research project fundamentally was about the most influential forces on one's "self" throughout his/her life-span. Consequently, by focusing on his "self" in his life-stories, he may have very well been sincerely trying to go along with the basic tenant of the study. Yet, another possible explanation is that Mr. Z is truly egocentric; but this did not fit with his generous personality, as well as his overall presentation throughout the interview. Moreover, his potential ego-centricity was explored somewhat during the interview by asking about any past conflicts with family members, close friends and or colleagues (this was discussed under the guise of exploring any past self-defeating behaviors—which is discussed in the latter paragraphs), and if anyone ever criticized him for being self-centered. Without hesitation, he appeared to genuinely respond: "No, I have always tried to think of the needs, thoughts and feelings of others—although, I have been criticized for being too vigilant of other people's concerns."

The order in which the structure of his life review seemed to follow was essentially: he began with discussing his military career, ended with discussing the importance of patriotism “within the leading democratic society” (which he saw tied to military duty as being compulsory), and the middle of the interview was mostly about his military career as well.

When attempting to look at the primary causes of his main perspective of his own self-evolution through the lens of his life review, there are several potential explanations. Firstly, there are highly suggestive influences that pre-date his birth: there is reportedly a family history of military service that goes far down the line of his genealogy. Mr. Z. relays: “I have been told, since I was a boy, that my great, great, grand-father was a military man, and that all of the patriarchs in our family after him were military men—most of which were in the navy.” Secondly, the social-historical circumstances of his time undoubtedly had an influence, as he lived as a young adult during Hitler’s regime and had to flee his homeland as a result of the Nazi invasion and World War II. Therefore, the war/militant mentality was ever-present during the years when he was at the prime of his life—not to mention how, as a child, he lived through World War I. Thirdly, he exclaims that he truly had a knack and affinity for seamanship, science/physics, and being a leader: “...especially leading for a cause I believe in—patriotism in the name of democracy first and foremost.” Fourthly, his successful ascension the ranks during his tenure in the military reinforced his life long involvement in the armed forces. Mr. Z. reports that he started off in the military in Poland and was quite successful with rapid promotions, then he was utilized in the British military while still living in Poland,



and, when the “Americans saw my distinguished past military career, my citizenship was expedited under the arrangement that I would serve as an officer in their Navy. I had always been quite rewarded [monetarily] and reinforced by staying in the military, as it served my life well in many respects.” Lastly, another plausible explanation of his life review perspective of the main path of his self-evolution relates to plain survival: “At one point, for many of us, there was genuine fear that Hitler and the axis powers might win the war, and we would all be doomed to genocide and fanaticism if we didn’t band together and fight.”

When looking at the consequences of Mr. Z’s life-review perspective of the main trends of his self-evolution, it appears that he has gained ego integrity from it—based on the existential psychology’s premise that man inherently searches for the meaning and purpose in his life (as Victor Frankl, the father of existential psychology, undoubtedly concurs in his book *Man’s Search for Meaning*). He also was able to express in the armed forces, and as a father, what he believes to be his inherent inclinations and/or aptitudes: leadership ability, intellectual innovation, and “...being a compassionate and sensitive man.” Furthermore, his military career has allowed him to feel that he honored his obligation as a good provider/bread winner for the family, as he states: “I was successful in many respects during my military career, not excluding wealth for my family.” However, the question remains—is Mr. Z’s ideal and real self congruent and, as a result, does he now have objectively genuine ego integrity and is possibly even self-actualizing?

When exploring the aforementioned question, the first area of inquiry pertained to self-defeating behaviors. Ironically, Mr. Z. stated that the very ambition that brought his life so much success also brought him some mishaps. In other words, at times he lost friends over his financial and career-oriented success. However, he had to think long and hard about any self-defeating behaviors before he would respond, to the point where he asked for an intermission to reflect on it. Upon the reconvening of the interview, he produced a list that he made during the intermission of *just* three events, which were relating to his overzealous ambition towards his military career and coinciding financial success. Thus, because of his seemingly unwillingness to fully disclose or expound on his life-span perspective of his self-defeating behaviors, the concern developed as to whether or not Mr. Z was truly possessing congruence between his ideal and real self and if perhaps his perspective of his self-evolution has been severely distorted by ego-defense mechanisms.

However, bearing in mind Mr. Z's high intelligence, this was challenged during the interview very carefully. Once again, the plausibility of his very clear understanding of this project might have confused the interpretation of his interview. In other words, when he was asked, subsequent to producing his list of three self-defeating events, if he thought he only made three mistakes his whole life, he responded in kind: "Hell no! I have made countless mistakes, many of which I was aware of at the time and others that I only now see in hindsight. I was only trying to give you three clear examples of how blind ambition and greed were probably the main contributors to many of my mistakes or self-defeating behaviors." Furthermore, he went on to discuss how he now believes that his life in the



military was a result of a combination of his on inherent inclinations, circumstantial factors, and familial influences (in an ancestral sense). Yet, he has come to accept his course in life, because he does not truly believe that he would have been able to tap into all of his abilities, in a contributory sense, via any other profession—seemingly reflecting peek performances. In addition, he adds that he gets much satisfaction from his memories in the armed forces, as they were the most “enjoyable” times and he had so much “adventure” and excitement that he “wouldn’t trade it for the world”—seemingly reflecting peek experiences. Therefore, it dose not appear incidental that Mr. Z’s life-stories relayed during the interview fairly substantiate the preceding quotes.

Thus, the life review process for Mr. Z. during his elderly years is clearly present to some degree (when he is not engaged in one of his many current hobbies). Moreover, his perspective of the main path of his self-evolution appears to follow three main trends in rank order: a military seaman and patriot (for the democratic cause), an intellectual/scientist (which also interrelates with his military service) and a father of three sons. Also, although it is not fully conclusive, it does appear that he possesses genuine ego integrity, with high congruence between his ideal and real self. With all the previously observed dynamics, coupled with his high intelligence, wisdom and very accepting/content demeanor, it is very plausible that Mr. Z is even self-actualizing. Lastly, Mr. Z’s overt depiction of his life-review and self-evolution is an amazing reservoir of potential learning experience for any and all that are willing to take the time to witness his impressive intellect at work as he describes in engaging detail his many wondrous past events.

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**Ms. Dogerty** (Ms. D.) is ninety-five years old, a widow and currently resides in a semi-private room at a local nursing home. She is alert and oriented, but clearly has some age-related, short-term memory impairment. However, she demonstrated solid long-term memory capacity throughout the interview process. She is extremely active and energetic, and this is very impressive, not only because of her age, but also because she is an amputee (she uses a walker and a prosthetic leg due to an amputation from cancer in her left leg several years ago). Her affect is quite bright, but she has constant nervous energy. She is always thinking out loud with spontaneous thoughts, seemingly on the border of almost worrying or having excessive anxiety, but not quite (although she is clearly very sensitive). She says she enjoys keeping busy constantly: "I love doing things, and if I slow down, at my age, I might die" (she then exhibited her characteristic nervous laugh, which she demonstrated throughout the interview). She shows no signs or symptoms of depression, and she presents as a very simple, direct and fairly lucid elderly woman. However, her intelligence is either only average or maybe slightly below average—she needed much prompting to provide any in-depth responses, but, even with the prompting, her answers were still relatively minimal. She also had some difficulty focusing, as she often became tangential with loose associations and random thoughts, which she typically shared out loud. (It is always feasible that Ms. D.'s cognitive ability was not properly or fully screened via the mental status assessment tools, which have a marked degree of subjectivity, provided in the appendix. Nonetheless, comparatively speaking, for her age group [and within the limited parameters of convenience sampling],

she is a fairly viable participant with regards to the criteria relating to "able-mindedness".)

Ms. D. was born in Philadelphia, and resided there for most of her life. She only moved to Florida approximately ten years ago because she was living with her daughter who was moving there (she has just one daughter [no other children] and her room has several pictures of her daughter and her daughter's children). She has resided in the local nursing home for the past two years: "My daughter just can't care for me any more—it makes me sad, but I understand. I was only getting \$600.00 per month from social security and my medications alone were \$200.00 per month. She just can't afford it, so now I am living her on Medicaid. I *still* think about money too much, and I have most of my life."

She said she had a happy and loving family while growing up with a mother who was a dedicated housewife (her mother did not finish the eighth grade), but she did not elaborate. Ms. D. had three sisters—one died at age six from an unknown illness. The eldest sister died three years ago (she was one hundred and three years old). The other sister is six years younger than Ms. D: "I speak with her each month. She is still in Philly. I visit once a year, and every time they rush us towards the end of the day to say goodbye. But, I always remind them that we are old and it may be the last time we see each other". Ms D. dropped out of school during her senior year, and she states that her English teacher was devastated: "I was really good at writing when I was young. They didn't think much about not graduating back then. So, I became a hairdresser when I was

young, and I did that until my daughter was born, but I didn't make much money. I was married by eighteen and didn't have my daughter until I was in my twenties"

She prays almost every morning (she states she has done this all her life), and she says grace before every meal and the "Lord's Prayer" at least three times a day. She officially converted to Roman Catholicism after going to church with her daughter's family, when her daughter had children, for several years (her room has crosses, rosary beads and other religious icons). She was raised a "devout" Presbyterian, but she raised her daughter Roman Catholic because her spouse was Roman Catholic. She was married for about twenty years to her daughter's father, but finally divorced him because "I finally refused to put up with his drunkenness. The only fun times I remember with him were when he used to throw his hat across the living room when he would come home at night. You see, I was such a busy body, I always moved the furniture around daily, and at night when he would come home, he would trip over the furniture because he couldn't see it and it was different from when he left in the morning. So, he used to first throw his hat across the room to see if it would hit anything." After her divorce, she re-married to Mr. D, and she stayed with him for ten years until he died of a heart attack.

Ms. D. is very elderly, short (with one leg) and a whirlwind of energy. She claims she was/is easy going, but her feelings are hurt easily, which she tries never to reveal: "I would not change that—I like me alright." She was often too preoccupied with things to do in her room or even thoughts relating to the interview itself to *fully* illuminate her life review. However, she did admit that she thinks now, more than any other time, about the

times she had with her daughter through the years. She adds: “I love her so much, she turned out great and she is all I have now.” She also says that she often has many regrets about her marital choices and financial choices, which are now clear to her.

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When analyzing Ms. D’s interview, firstly, it is noteworthy that she was so very preoccupied with so many random concerns (e.g., her laundry, if lunch was going to be late, what time her daughter was coming, etc.), that it was truly difficult to allow for a natural unfolding of the interview process. Furthermore, even though she indicated that she thinks about her past now more than ever, her seemingly average intelligence, lack of depth of thought and labile focus made it difficult to completely reveal this during the interview process. Thus, the analysis of the interview is minimal, simply because the data itself is not substantial, and, as a result, the validity is somewhat questionable.

The highest frequency of responses was related to Ms. D’s memories of her daughter growing up. This was also reflected in intensity, structure and order. It appeared that the only time when Ms. D. became focused, detail oriented and truly elated (as revealed in her tone, affect and mannerisms/bodily gestures) is when she relayed the life stories concerning her raising her daughter. This was further substantiated by the décor in her room—it was almost exclusively decorated with pictures of her daughter as a child, and her daughter’s current family. The only other décor was of a religious nature.

Religious thought and the evolution of her current religious beliefs were the second most frequent, intense and structured themes that she revealed throughout the interview

process. There is no doubt that she now sees religious affiliation as a large part of her past and current identity, and “very important in one’s life.” In addition, with much less emphasis but still to a noteworthy degree, she also minimally repeated themes regarding regret over poor finances, lack of education, and marital choices.

The causes or possible influences regarding Ms. D’s perspective of her self-evolution, as revealed via her dimly illuminated life review process, are somewhat obscure. Once again, due to the lack of substance from the interview itself, it is difficult to hypothesize about several possible explanations. Nonetheless, five potential explanations/influences *seemingly* revealed themselves.

Firstly, she stated that she grew up in a “happy and loving” family, and her mother was a grade school dropout who had children at a young age. She has two sisters who also didn’t finish high school, married young and soon after had a family—i.e., potential familial influences. Secondly, regarding *her* dropping out of school and quickly marrying, she stated: “In those times, that was kinda expected. And, I don’t mind now because I have my daughter—she is all I have”—i.e., a potential interrelation of a lack of educational values, generational and familial influences. Thirdly, she changed her religion (which she added “taught her to respect the institution of marriage and family”), something that she was “devout” with, for her husband, and she stayed with him until her daughter was eighteen, even though: “He was a drunk from the beginning, but he still brought home a pay check, although he barely brought home enough”—i.e., potential interrelated familial, economic and religious influences. Fourthly, as was previously

mentioned, she discussed her evolution/life-span transformation of her religious affiliation with the second most emphasis throughout the interview. Furthermore, which was also previously mentioned, her room has select religious icons for décor and she has prayed consistently throughout her life. Therefore, it is plausible that religion is a strong presence and source of comfort that she has largely identified with throughout her life (i.e., once again, potential religious influences emerge). Overall, it appears that certain generational, familial, marital, religious and socio-economic/educational forces influenced her perspective of her self-evolution. However, it is also plausible that her potentially low IQ, "easy-going" personality and lack of education have pre-disposed her to blind acceptance of certain social or familial forces/constraints, a life of excessive tolerance, and, potentially, a co-dependent personality.

The consequences of Ms. D's main perspectives of her self-evolution as viewed via her life-review are that they *potentially* yield ego integrity and meaning for her, as opposed to ego despair. In another words, raising her daughter and being, primarily, a housewife/stay at home mom for most of her adult life now seems to give her *some* meaning, as she states: "I don't mind now (re: dropping out of high school, and exclusively being a housewife/stay at home mother for most of her adult life), because I have my daughter—she is all I have." Furthermore, with her life-long adherence to religion she finds comfort, now that she may soon "meet her maker" and "especially" since she was never "a bad person and always religious." However, this appears *potentially* as a distorted sense of ego integrity, and one that is perhaps disingenuous and



only obtained through a lifetime of blind compliance of certain social forces (as mentioned above) and possibly strong ego defense mechanisms.

For example, when Ms. D. discussed her only mentioned self-defeating behavior of being "too easy going and too sensitive", she quickly retracted that statement and said that she likes herself and her past just fine and would not change any aspect of her personality. However, based on what was revealed in her minimally exhibited life-review, it is very feasible that the aforementioned personality traits are what caused her marital strife and coinciding financial concerns—e.g., she may have a had co-dependant/enabling personality reflected in her "easy goingness"/excessive tolerance. Yet, just as a typical co-dependent/enabler (Montie, 2001), she seems to exercise denial as an avoidance mechanism (i.e., ego defense mechanism) in facing the potential reality of this self-defeating trait. Moreover, she intimated how she now accepts that she remained with her alcoholic ex-husband because it was for the sake of her daughter—i.e., seemingly rationalizing/justifying her actions and once again potentially exercising strong ego defense mechanisms.

Thus, Ms. D.'s interview suggests, although does not *fully* reveal, that she is engaged in life review, but a glimpse of her past does reflect that her life is seemingly rich with potentially educational experiences for future generations (if only her past experiences were more fully exposed). Moreover, Ms. D's viewpoint of her self-evolution within her life review seems to yield a self that is/was influenced by two main dynamics: familial and religious factors. However, more covert influences are also plausible as possible



"self" formulating forces: her potentially low IQ, her potential co-dependent personality traits/relationship issues, socio-economic/educational forces, and generational factors.

Lastly, although it is difficult to conclusively determine whether or not Ms. D. possesses genuine ego integrity, the minimal data suggests that she may have only partial, genuine ego integrity (suggesting that ego integrity and ego despair are polar opposites that function on a continuum). In addition, her real self and ideal self seemingly are not *fully* congruent, and her life seems devoid of peak performances and with only vague notions, at best, of potential peak experiences (e.g., her "happy" memories of her time raising her daughter). It is extremely plausible that Ms. D.'s genuine self-evolution, if uninhibited, could have led her towards a completely different life course. For example, she may have become an acclaimed novelist, as she evidently showed aptitude for this at a young age. Yet, Ms. D., unfortunately, does not clearly possess self-actualizing traits, which is further echoed in her somewhat nervous demeanor, fear of death and potentially strong ego-defense mechanisms.

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**Ms. Granzaull** (Ms. G.) is ninety years old, a widow and Hispanic. She currently resides in a private room in a nursing home, which she just moved into within the last six months, and she expects to live there until she is deceased (her room is plastered with old time photos [mostly black and white] of her and her family).

Ms. G. shows very little signs of any cognitive deficits, as her recent and remote memory appear largely intact, she is completely alert and oriented, and she demonstrates minimal age-related thought processing decrements. Furthermore, her affect is quite bright (nursing staff states she is upbeat even when she is alone and unaware that staff is observing her), and her medical chart is unremarkable for any documentation noting signs and/or symptoms of depression. In fact, Ms. G. seems quite at peace with herself, and mostly accepting of her placement in the nursing home. In addition, she has an exceptional capacity for abstraction, an impressive fund of knowledge, and she functions independently with most of her activities of daily living (ADL's). Essentially, she appears to be an excellent candidate for this research project.

Ms. G. was born in Venezuela, moved to Trinidad, then back to Venezuela, then back to Trinidad, and then ultimately to the United states (Miami, Florida) in 1979 where she has remained ever since (except for occasional visits back to Venezuela). She was raised as a stringent adherent of Roman Catholicism, but formulated her own beliefs after much exposure to other religions throughout her life, which she discussed in length. She adds that her family always just "got by" financially, with only modest means "at best." Ms. G. relays that she has "only" a high school diploma, but she was educated through the school of "hard knocks". She also fluently speaks Spanish, Portuguese and English (to this day). Her mother died when she was an infant, and her father was in the cattle industry causing him to often leave home for long periods. Ms. G. and her only sibling (her brother) were primarily raised by her aunt and uncle, and she states that she is forever indebted to them: "But, that is the way it was in my culture—family looked after

each other, and I knew I would do the same when I became of age". She met her husband of forty-four years in Trinidad (he has been deceased for the past fifteen years), and she adds that he "cheated" on her once—but her family was too important to not forgive him: "In my culture, you are suppose to forgive and keep the family together at all costs—it is important for the kids and society." She had seven children (one child died as an adult in a car accident, which she states was the most disturbing event in her life), and she currently has several grandchildren and a handful of great-grand children. Ms. G. is extraordinarily proud of her children and extended family as a whole. She states that she believes it was her purpose in life to foster and properly raise many offspring. She adds that she could die tomorrow a very content woman because she believes she has fulfilled her goal in life.

Ms. G. is currently semi-dependant on an oxygen nebulizer to assist her breathing due to a lifetime of smoking—she adds, "That was what my generation did, we did not know smoking was bad for us—every body smoked that was cool or sexy". She is small in stature and slightly obese, but still fairly ambulatory and has a somewhat steady gait with the assistance of a walker. Ms. G. also has other health problems because of a lifetime of over eating. Ms. G. states she prays constantly, "...and I was religious when I was young too, it is difficult to be Hispanic and not be religious.", but, she "definitely" thinks more about religion now that she is in her "golden years", as opposed to when she was younger and spryer. She adds that she is constantly asking God to forgive her because of her continual use of profanity when she is alone and becomes frustrated about her "decrepit"

body; a life-long habit that often accompanies her quick temper. However, she states that she has learned to accept that she is a “hot-blooded and now very old Hispanic woman”.

Ms. G. is a refined woman, with a sophisticated, well kempt and groomed appearance, which she also attributes to her ethnic background and how her aunt raised her: “Hispanic women are taught to take pride in their appearance and be confident.” Her demeanor is one of intelligence and worldliness, and discussion with her substantiates that she is definitely without poverty of thought. She adds that she has chosen a private room because she doesn't have much in common to discuss with the “old farts with atrophied brains” at the nursing home where she resides. However, she does occasionally attend activities in the facility (e.g., bingo and movie night), but she mostly “ruminates about times from the past”. She says her memories are all she has, as she quotes an unnamed Spanish poet: *Recordar Es Vivir Con La Memoria* (i.e., To Remember Is To Live With Your Memories).

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When analyzing Ms. G.’s interview, what was explored initially was what she had stated most frequently within her obviously gross propensity to exemplify the life-review process and a life-span depiction of her “self”: Ms. G. needed very little prompting via the devised questionnaire to start indulging in nostalgia. A close review of the video tape revealed that she mentioned and re-mentioned life-stories about her immediate, nuclear family twenty eight times in the course of a two hour interview—more frequently than she discussed anything else (she mentioned her extended family seventeen times—the second most frequently discussed topic). When attempts were made to re-direct Ms. G.

into another area of her life history (e.g., occupational and educational aspirations or past friendships), she only briefly departed from speaking about her family history and then managed to get back onto the topic of her family history within a few minutes or less (or she discussed any new topic almost exclusively in relation to her family history). She most often spoke of distant memories, with vivid detail and great joy, typically of when she was a housewife raising her kids. Ms. G. believed those days to be "the happiest moments of my life." She also repeated several times when and how often her family visits her (mostly her adult children), and how they reminisce about the "good old days."

In addition, the magnitude or intensity in which Ms. G. discussed the history of her family was overtly apparent. In comparison to when she spoke of other areas in her life, when she spoke about her family, particularly past "happy" memories, her overall affect became tremendously more brightened (she seemed to almost be beaming with pride) and her bodily gestures became highly animated. Moreover, the tone of her voice became distinctly different with a higher pitch, as if she was very gleeful and elated. Also, the types of things she would say about her family were more striking than any other comments regarding other areas of her life-history: "I am so proud of my children", "I have fulfilled my goals in life in being the best mother, grand mother, and great-grand mother possible", and "My family memories bring me immense fulfillment." When Ms. G. stated the aforementioned comments her already bright affect became even brighter and her posture more upright—this did not occur when she discussed any other aspects of her life. At one point, in the middle of the interview, her phone rang and it was her son—her response was one of ecstatic joy, and she said: "I love you" six times. She also

discussed her children's accomplishments as children and adults, and their love of family too. The order of what she discussed was also noted—she began with speaking of her family memories (however, this was the family that she was born into and the one she was raised by, she also dwelled on positive memories of her brother for sometime), ended with speaking about her family memories (mainly her children), and often came back to speaking about her family all throughout the interview (also, mainly her children). She almost always spoke of her children first (except for in the very beginning with the onset of her relaying the origins of her life-history), and then her grandchildren to a somewhat lesser extent and then her great-grand children she discussed, comparatively, the least.

When looking at the possible causes for Ms. G.'s strong affinity for her family-related reminiscing, several potential explanations emerge. The first potential explanation is related to the fact that she lost her mother at a very young age, and it may have deeply affected her, as she mentioned this several times. Moreover, she may have been compensating for her own losses as a child, as well as somehow paying her "debt", by proxy, to her aunt for being a "burden" to her—i.e., reliving the years of "payback" might bring her comfort. Another potential explanation is related to her ethnic background, as she stated several times that the Hispanic culture is one that is very family oriented and "family memories are very important to this old *Hispanic* woman". Also, she often spoke of how family was "all she ever had", and that she was always a "short, fat, and hot tempered *Hispanic* woman without many friends" (she adds that her Hispanic appearance [i.e., dark skin] and her mild accent use to prompt discrimination against her in certain social settings). The preceding quote reflects how Ms. G. may have been only able to find



self-worth in her role as a devoted and great matron, and suggests the probable influence of her strong Hispanic heritage on her self-evolution. She also discussed how her religious beliefs incorporate strong familial values. Lastly, the possibility exists that Ms. G., in addition to any or all of the preceding potential influences, may have just fully found her niche in life; thus, she may have high congruence between her ideal self/real self and truly was/is as happy as she can be with dedicating her life to the role of a great matron.

Finally, when analyzing the consequences of her high propensity to think back on her memories of her family, there is no doubt that this *appears* to bring her genuine ego integrity, as opposed to ego despair. This is mostly evident in her overall presentation, as her personality traits and behavior are the antithesis of that explained earlier of someone experiencing ego despair. Furthermore, her past-life acceptance and current positive exhibition does not appear related to the Hawthorne effect, simply because of the observations noted earlier by the nursing staff: Ms. G. is evidently consistent with what she exhibits even when she is not aware that she is being observed. In addition, Ms. G. never hesitated in the slightest when asked to respond about any life-long or poignant self-defeating behaviors. In fact, she discussed very openly and without shame her minimal regrets regarding over-eating, being quick-tempered, her financial/educational regrets, smoking most of her life, and how she wished she learned more about other religions at an earlier age—as if she has fully come to accept it and is now somewhat detached from it in an emotional sense. This is especially striking due to her current, declining physical condition: she is essentially terminal due to her being in the latter stages of chronic pulmonary obstructive disorder (COPD) from smoking all her life (she



is maintained with the assistance of a bed-side oxygen nebulizer), she has worsening hypertension (potentially interrelated with her quick-temperedness) and she has severe diabetes (as a result of a life-time of obesity/overeating). Moreover, she never hesitated or was embarrassed to respond and be quite candidly forthright with *all* disclosures of a personal nature from her past memories (even though she did spend more time focusing on positive life-time memories). Once again, she appears to have obtained ego integrity, but is there really congruence between her life-span perspective of her ideal self and real self; hence, is she genuinely self-actualizing with a lifetime of true peak performances and/or experiences? Or, are there overly active ego defense mechanisms at work that potentially distorted her self-evolution throughout her life and now are potentially distorting her life review?

When re-looking at the video tape more closely, Ms. G.'s family memories definitely revealed the most frequency, magnitude, structure, ordering, causes and consequences; however, there were areas of her life that she focused on to a lesser extent, but were still focused-on to a noteworthy degree. More specifically, she discussed four other general areas in descending order of degrees of focus: her Hispanic heritage/culture, her religiosity/spirituality, her generational influences and low socioeconomic status (especially her lack of formal education). The aforementioned areas of focus coupled with her main focus regarding her familial memories, when analyzed more closely, provide possible insight regarding her perspective of her self-evolution, whether or not she has truly experienced genuine ego integrity and is (perhaps) self-actualizing. Moreover, the preceding areas of focus can potentially indicate if there are overly active

ego defense mechanisms at work that have prevented her from true congruence between her real and ideal self.

Once again, Ms. G. seems to view her "self" as primarily a culmination of a life-time of living by and with strong familial values, which appear at least somewhat due to the secondary and tertiary influences on her self-evolution—her Hispanic heritage and her religiosity/spirituality, as she states: "That's what we do in my culture, family looks after one another...my religious beliefs hold the preservation of the family as sacred." Moreover, she also intimates that generational and financial/educational influences have played a part, to a minimal extent, in formulating her "self". Hence, with Ms. G.'s smoking, her exceptional devotion to family (even when her spouse was unfaithful), her hot temperedness, low socioeconomic/educational status and life-time of over-eating—*all* seem interrelated with her Hispanic culture/heritage, her religiosity/spirituality, generational influences, and/or financial/educational factors, as she relays: "In my *time* and in my *culture*, family stuck together through thick and thin, for better or for worse...my spirituality is definitely tied to honoring the family...but, I just accept that I am a hot tempered *Hispanic* women...in that *time*, we all smoked—nobody knew it was so bad for you...we were always kinda *poor*, so the family is all we really had...*Hispanic culture* is all about cooking/eating and meal times with the family, it is almost impossible to not fall in love with *eating* —my son even owns a restaurant!" However, it is possible that all these preceding quotes are, to some extent, rationalizations or distorted justifications (i.e., ego defense mechanisms), and Ms. G. may have/had other inclinations that could have flourished her self-evolution in another direction.

Moreover, when she was discussing her life-span perspective of self-defeating behaviors, Ms. G. often mentioned she was always a person of "modest means", and that is one thing she would maybe go back and change: she wished she had more money and maybe more education so she could then be more pre-disposed to make more money. She also added that she would change how obese and temperamental she was. Subsequently, she discussed all of her current spiritual beliefs, which have a foundation in Judeo-Christian doctrine, but she is now much more ecumenical in her own beliefs. Ms. G. adds: "I wish I had more exposure to other faiths at a younger age, I think it held me back with how I perceived certain events in my life." The preceding remarks were probed further during the interview to explore if Ms. G.'s ideal self was perhaps in actually *not* one that was naturally or genuinely connected to strong familial dynamics, her Hispanic culture, generational factors, religious/spiritual doctrine, financial/ educational influence and her own inherent inclinations or aptitudes. Instead, it is possible that her ideal self was more characteristic of other aspirations, abilities and/or inclinations—only to be distorted or *suppressed* by strong ego defense mechanisms and/or familial, cultural, generational, and economic/ educational dynamics.

However, Ms. G., without the slightest apprehension, asserts that she dreamed of being a great matronly type with a big family of her own for as long as she can remember. She does admit that not truly have her own Mother as a child, having a life time of strong Hispanic/cultural influences (including certain religious doctrine), and poignant generational and financial/educational factors; "...all in all, more than likely,"

played a part in her wants, desires and inclinations in life—all of which are connected to an identity reflecting a great matron of a large family. Nonetheless, she asserts that even though she has some "minimal" regrets, she could never imagine obtaining so much joy from anything else, then or now, and the many stories of intensely pleasurable moments with her family substantiate this claim—i.e., seemingly reflecting peak experiences. Furthermore, she adds that she could not imagine being as skilled at anything else—this is also reflected in her many stories on how well she would juggle being a house wife and mother of a very demanding, "but loving", family to the point of "transcending even what I thought I was capable of ...and bringing me more fulfillment than anything else imaginable"— i.e., seemingly reflecting peak performances.

Thus, firstly, the evidence does seem to substantiate that Ms. G. clearly has been actively partaking in life-review in her elderly years, especially in her latter years as she contends with the terminal stages of COPD and is acutely aware that death is somewhat imminent. Secondly, her depiction of her self-evolution is one seemingly steered by familial dynamics, cultural/heritage influences, certain religious/spiritual beliefs, financial/educational factors, and, very possibly, her own inherent tendencies and aptitude (to some extent) in life. Thirdly, an exploration of Ms. G.'s perspective of her life review and self-evolution, coupled with potential psychological dynamics, seems to fairly substantiate—even though it is not fully conclusive—that Ms. G. has high congruence between her real self and ideal self and, thus, appears to have fairly strong ego integrity. She may even be self-actualizing to this day with many peak experiences.

Lastly, Ms. G.'s outward revealing of her life-review reveals that she has had a long, experienced and rich life. The lessons she has learned, the values (mostly familial) she so strongly stands for, and the self-defeating events she has relayed are all clearly invaluable insights from which subsequent generations could gain much understanding and enlightenment. Hence, Ms. G.'s life review and life span depiction of her self-evolution are definitely worthy of respect and appreciation as a potential learning experience for all future generations.

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**Ms. Lanieri** (Ms. L.) is ninety years old, a widow and currently resides in a semi-private room at the local nursing home (she has roommates that come and go for rehabilitation). She is fairly independent with her ADL's, but she is non-ambulatory and mostly self-propels herself in a wheel chair. She reflects only mild, age-related short-term memory deficits, but she demonstrated excellent long-term memory capacity throughout the interview. She is alert and oriented in all spheres (person, place, time and situation), and is devoid of any signs or symptoms of mood/anxiety disorders. Actually, Ms. L. is the antithesis of a person with mood/anxiety problems—she is seemingly a perfect reflection of the stereotypical sweet old lady, who is extremely gentle and soft-spoken. She maintains attentive eye contact without fail, and leans in and holds the interviewer's hand episodically throughout the interview as she relays her many joyful, familial memories. She provides simple and humble answers, which often warranted prompting—she appeared almost shy and/or more interested in listening to the interviewer than replying with any in-depth and open-ended responses about her self.

Ms. L. was born in Brownsville, Texas, and she lived there until approximately ten years after she was married. She states that she was born a twin, but her twin brother died at birth, she exclaims: "I thank god daily for allowing me to live and take care of that baby girl" (i.e., her daughter, who she states she is exceptionally close to). Her Great-grandmother was part Native American (she stated this with pride), her Mother was mostly American-Irish and her father was Dutch (he was actually born in Holland). She stated that she doesn't know much about her dad's side of the family, except that he had a brother in California (which he visited once or twice) and a sister who was a nun. She adds that she wished she knew more about her dad's side of the family, but he was never very forthright with that information.

Ms. L.'s mother was a non-denominational Christian and her father was Roman Catholic. She adds that her father went to Church often, but her mother went sporadically and to different churches. She said neither one of her parents guided her in a religious fashion, so she went, on occasion, to various churches (she especially liked the Christmas mass at the Roman Catholic Church). She relays that around age thirteen she started to "pal around with some gals" who were Presbyterian, and then started to go to that church. She reports that, although she is basically Christian, she had much confusion about religion most of her life and wishes her parents guided her more in that area. She adds that she thinks about religion more nowadays than in the past.



Ms. L.'s mother was a stay at home mom, but her dad "worked all the time." She had three brothers—one older and two younger, but she states she only remained close with her eldest brother into adulthood. All of her brothers are deceased now, and she says she sometimes wishes she were closer to them, as she thinks about her brothers now more than ever. She adds that they often played pranks on her because she was the one who typically had to look after them (which she resented), "...until I was seventeen, and started dating boys and didn't have as much time for them." Hence, she didn't ever take them seriously or listen to them, which persisted into adulthood. She now wishes she listened to them and loved them more.

Ms. L. dropped-out of high school when she was sixteen, and she was married and had children by age eighteen. She states that Brownville was full of Mexicans, and it was difficult for whites to get certain jobs unless they were bi-lingual ((i.e., English/Spanish). She states she was a clerk for a little while, until she got married, because she was bi-lingual (she currently speaks some Spanish, as she states: "Una poceeta" [spelled phonetically]). However, her husband had to work very hard so she could be a stay at home mom: "He use to leave in the morning when it was dark, and come home at night when it was dark—and we were still dirt poor, but we managed." She moved to Brooklyn at age thirty (because her husband's employer transferred him), and she resided there until age sixty when her husband, of forty-two years, passed away: "He was the best guy in the world. We never fought—I never went home to mama at all. I think about him all the time, and cherish those memories so very much. I also cherish the memories of my kids, but when my husband died I cried and went to the cemetery everyday for months—I



have come to accept that we all must die one day and, remember, I am ninety so that was almost thirty years ago” (there are several pictures of her husband all over her room, as well as some pictures of her kids and other family members). She continues, “We had such a wonderful marriage, I would not change a thing.” (Although, after thorough probing about any potential self-defeating behaviors later in the interview [discussed more fully in a latter segment], Ms. L. states: “I guess I was a little jealousy type at times, and I would maybe change that but that’s all.” She also stated that she wished her and her husband when to church more often, but she is real proud of her son who now teaches Sunday school. Moreover, she regrets having to give up their dog, of ten years, to a Mexican family when they left Texas: “We couldn’t take her because we were moving into my sister-in-laws and my husband would not allow it, but we at least gave her to a nice Mexican family—they don’t believe in putting pets down.”)

Shortly after Ms. L.'s husband died, she then moved to Florida to live with her daughter. She resided with her daughter until approximately ten years ago, when she felt it was best that she move into a nursing home. For sometime, health permitting, she kept up with the simple things she enjoyed doing most of her life: spending time with and nurturing her family, cooking, eating her favorite food (Mexican and an “occasional” tequila), dancing, sewing and swimming—which she states is one of her favorite activities (because it was often so very hot in Texas, she swam frequently in her youth). She added that she always had one or two close friends that she kept in touch with, but they are deceased now and she often thinks about them: “We really don’t appreciate what we have until after it is gone” (her closest friend died just three years ago).

When Ms. L. was asked about any self-defeating behaviors and/or regrets that she might currently reflect on, she had a very hard time coming-up with any answer. This line of questioning involved in-depth probing and challenging of certain norms during the interview to elicit some responses. Initially, Ms. Lanier eventually replied: “I have no real regrets, and I really wouldn’t change anything—I have only pleasant memories.” However, after some probing, some minor regrets and/or self-defeating behaviors did surface.

First, Ms. L. relayed a story about how she played hooky from high school, and her dad caught her—she was very embarrassed and wishes she could erase that from her memory. She also stated how she smoked for a couple of years as a teenager, and she now thinks that was foolish and wishes she never had done it, but she never really has dwelled on it.

Ms. L. subsequently discussed how she had somewhat of a temper, and “would bottle things up” until she “exploded” and then said things she wished she hadn’t—she now wishes she was less like that at times (i.e., being “mean or hateful”), and more (consistently) loving, accepting, self-controlled, forgiving and thoughtful. But, she adds: “I was usually a very thoughtful person, and did control myself most of the time because I was concerned about being honest, sensitive and god fearing. However, I am much more tolerant and accepting now.” In addition, she says she thinks she could have been more sociable, but she thought the other “gals” were all snobbish towards her: “I thought

it was because I was always poor, but I came to find out later that they didn't have anymore money than I did." She says that she sometimes wishes she saved more money throughout her life, and that the men in her life (her father and husband) didn't have to work so hard. "My husband worked real hard for a railroad company, and he had a great pension—but it is all gone now, and I have to live off of state assistance (i.e., Medicaid). I definitely think about money now more than I use to, as well as how a lifetime of hard work (her husband's and father's lifetime) still isn't enough. But, I don't let it upset me none—that's just life." She then discussed how she took art classes at night to learn how to paint, but she had to stop that when she got married because they could not afford it. She sometimes wishes she kept up with art because she believed she was good at it and she enjoyed it. However, she said that it really does not bother her, and she, again, has no regrets. She then proceeded to discuss in vivid detail the circumstances surrounding the one time in her life that she received a speeding ticket—she wished that had not happened, but thinks about it "laughingly" these days.

Ms. L. continues with stating that after her son went off to college, she got a paper route job and it was very difficult because she had to get up at three a.m. every morning. She stated, at that time, she wondered about trying to become a bookkeeper or an accountant because she was good with numbers, but she never pursued it and does not really regret that. However, she does wish she had more education, but, she relays: "That is what the gals in my time did—we got married and pregnant at an early age, but I definitely don't regret that because the most important thing in my life was properly bringing-up my children." She adds that she is presently a democrat and she votes every

year “nowadays”, but sometimes she wishes she were more politically active as a young adult. She also mentioned how she traveled often within the United States for family vacations in the past, but she never made it out of the country: “I always wanted to go to Ireland, but I don’t have any desire to go anymore—we never had the money to go.” She reports no “real” regrets about her personality or appearance: “I like who I was/am for the most part, I guess I was a little tubby at times and could stand to lose some weight, but that never really bothered me. Nowadays, I like to get my hair done once in awhile, but I don’t worry about what others think of me nearly as much as I use to.” Lastly, she states: “My appendix ruptured once, and I almost died—I wish that never happen, but I didn’t have much control over that because it happened so suddenly. Oh yeah, I have also always wanted to learn to play golf (she use to play base ball and volley ball as a teenager and really enjoyed sports) and learn German, but I just never got around to it. It doesn’t really bother me that I never did those things, I just think it would have been neat to do them.”

Ms. L. is mostly positive and accepting about her past and present life (the staff at the nursing home confirms that in her moments alone and in the company of others she is consistent with the aforementioned observation, which negates any potential Hawthorne Effect). Once again, to get her to relay certain regrets and/or self-defeating behaviors was difficult. And even after much prompting, she just mainly relayed, as the preceding paragraphs reflect, isolated incidents and not many general traits or patterns. Furthermore, it is difficult to ascertain if she had/has a life of peak experiences and/or peak performances. She claims she is highly satisfied with the “simple” life she led with raising her family, and that she essentially has no regrets. She states that the only reason

she can speak of any past mistakes is simply because “hindsight is 20/20” and her past memories are all she has now. However, she does not easily recall any regrets or mistakes because she does not truly dwell on these things. She doesn’t *really* want to change anything (and is very accepting of life on its terms), and she has no guilt: “I just think of the happiness I had with my husband and children. I have contentment in my heart, and I have a loving family—after all, that is all we can ask for, to love and be loved within a good family.” She asserts that she still enjoys life, and sees her family often, and that she isn’t lonely: “I am *living* here, and I will die here and that is ok. My family is in my heart wherever I go, and I have memorable moments of them in my head always.” Ms. Lanier ended the interview with a long story about how proud she is of her grandson who just wrote a Shakespearean book about medieval times, and is presently teaching at Cambridge University in England. At the very end, she inserted: “And my eldest great-grandson just graduated from high school too—I am so proud of my family!”

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When analyzing Ms. L.’s recorded interview, the first striking observation is how consistently attentive, endearing, warm and friendly she was. Her eye contact was constant, as well as her smiling and leaning closely to the interviewer with every spoken word. Moreover, her verbal presentation and whole demeanor was always kind, gentle and caring, as she reached out and touched or held the hand of the interviewer sixteen times. However, her high propensity to engage in life review/self-depiction was initially not overtly apparent, as she seemed more humble or shy and much more at ease with listening to the interviewer than relaying anything about her self. Also, she often provided simple responses without much depth or reflection. Nonetheless, the interview

persisted and, ultimately, unveiled Ms. L.'s high propensity to engage in life review, and her depiction of her self-evolution.

The first noted themes of high frequency within the content of her spoken responses were definitely her adulthood preoccupation of being a good housewife, properly raising her two children, and her religiosity, respectively. She spoke the most of her memories of her husband, the second most about the memories of her children, the third most about past events concerning her extended family (which was equal with the frequency of the mentioning of past memories pertaining to the family she was born into) and the fourth most about her past and current religiosity (this was directly connected with mentioned concerns about being a kind and sensitive person—in addition to her religion, she admits that her upbringing also influenced her pre-disposition towards being kind and sensitive). This same rank order was reflected in the magnitude/ intensity, overall structuring, and order of her verbal responses during the interview. Moreover, the setting complemented her verbal responses—in her room the most memorabilia/pictures were of her husband, the second most of her children and then the third most of her extended family (with one small, decaying picture of the family she was born into) and the remaining wall/shelf space was reserved for religious icons (crosses, statues, prayer books, and two bibles). Furthermore, the colors and overall décor of the room was very warm and welcoming, and there were a couple of old Irish sayings and signs on the walls with humorous and friendly comments (a few comforting religious precepts were hung on the wall as well).



With much less frequency, intensity, structure, and well defined order—but still to a noteworthy degree—Ms. L. also revealed other patterns of identity in a somewhat descending order of dominance: a Texan with some Mexican cultural influences, a person with occasional impulse control issues, a life-time of low socio-economic standing (with below average education and little to no occupational experience, other than some brief secretarial work and a period of delivering papers), an Irish American (with some native American and Dutch heritage) who always had “a least one or two close friends” (until recently). However, once again, her prevailing theme was of an exceptionally pleasant, kind, warm, "god fearing" and accepting family woman/housewife with no regrets.

When attempting to look at the potential causes of Ms. L.'s perspective of her particular life review/self-evolution, there are many possible explanations. First, Ms. L.'s Mother's life is seemingly a carbon copy of her adult life—her mother also married a Texan, was very poor (but was she still able to be a dedicated stay at home mom/housewife), uneducated and her father (just like her husband) had to work from dawn to dusk. Secondly, she asserts that the fact that she dropped out of school and got married so soon was because of generational influences: "That's what us girls did in my day—we got married and pregnant at a very early age." Thirdly, she was very poor, both as a child and adult, and, thus, family was maybe all she had. Fourthly, Ms. L., self admittedly, is a very simple person (she states her IQ was tested when she was 35, and it was around 100) with very little education, and she has lived her whole existence with accepting life on its terms and not questioning the status quo. Fifthly, she said she didn't ever have many friends, wasn't that sociable, have some impulse control issues and she



was "tubby"; hence, it is plausible that a family life was the only setting where she could gain self-worth. Lastly, she learned to sew, cook and be a nurturing caregiver at a very early age, and she felt that she did not really have any skills to do anything else besides be a housewife/stay at home mother (There does not appear to be any strong influence from her heritage/ethnic background, other than what she believes to be "the friendliness and kindness of the Irish".).

The consequence of her perspective of Ms. L.'s life review/self-evolution is undoubtedly that it now gives her a sense of ego integrity. It appears that her real self is and has been congruent with her ideal self throughout her life span in her mind's eye. However, is there genuine congruence, and, thus, does she sincerely have ego integrity; or, are there certain ego defense mechanisms or even oppressive social forces at work?

Ms. L., when discussing certain regrets and/or self-defeating behaviors, relayed several events, behaviors and/or circumstances that she wished she could "take back". However, these were mostly isolated instances that did not readily come to mind, and only with intense probing did they finally surface—and, not without her prefacing each statement with a specific disclaimer: "I really don't have any regrets!" And, she really does not appear to have any regrets, as she is seemingly exceptionally at peace with herself even in the face of her impending death (Ms. L. needs an angioplasty operation, but the cardiologist does not believe that her "ticker" will withstand the operation—she has 1-2 years left at best.)

Ms. L. in *her* mind/reality has congruence between her ideal and real self; thus, she has genuine ego integrity—again, in her subjective reality. However, it is difficult to determine if she really is/has been self-actualizing; or, instead, if social forces and/or ego defense mechanisms have suppressed her true self and thwarted her genuine self-evolution. For example, with her desire to paint—perhaps if she wasn't oppressed by a low socioeconomic standing, generational and familial influences she could have become an exceptional artist. This also relates to her wanting to travel to Ireland, to play golf, to speak German, to be an accountant, to have more education, to dance or swim more, to be more politically active, to have more direction in her religion at an early age, and possibly to be more social. There is even legitimate concern, due to her seemingly high devotion to her spouse, that she may have somewhat lost her own identity via her marital union. It is also feasible that social forces were not truly the oppressor that potentially prevented Ms. L. from actualizing some of the things she wishes she did, but perhaps that's just how she justified or rationalized in her own mind not doing these because of fear of failing due to her limited intelligence, skills and self-esteem (i.e., ego defense mechanisms). Yet, even though it is difficult to determine if she is genuinely self-actualizing, her overall demeanor clearly suggests that she at least has ego integrity in her mind and contentment in her heart.

Overall, Ms. L. definitely is actively involved in her life review process. Moreover, this process, when carefully illuminated, yields a wealth of experience and potential education for individuals of subsequent generations that are willing to vicariously learn from the elderly.

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**Mr. Weatherby** (Mr. W.) is ninety years old, and a widower. He currently resides in a semi-private room in a local nursing home (his roommates come and go for rehabilitation). Mr. W. shows some mild recent memory impairment, which is seemingly age-related. However, his long term memory, although not fully demonstrated, does appear intact. He has some years of community college courses, but he did not graduate with any degree. Reportedly, vis-à-vis family members and the nursing staff, Mr. W. has a rich and adventurous background tied to a life-time of racing stock cars.

Mr. W. has multiple medical problems, and his affect, demeanor, verbal presentation and overall appearance truly reflect that of the stereotypical "grouchy old man." He is mostly bed-ridden and isolative in his room due to his several debilitating medical conditions and somewhat anti-social behavior. Moreover, he was nearly excluded from this study because of concern regarding skewed results due to Mr. W. potentially suffering from dysthymia or some other mood/psychiatric disorder. However, mental health assessment tools (see appendix), his medical chart and report from third parties (staff and family members) all seem to rule out any concern of an axis one diagnosis stemming from the criteria set forth by the psychiatric diagnosing manual (i.e., the DSM IV, TR). Furthermore, the nursing staff asserts that he is not clinically depressed, but that is "just his personality" and he even (at times) is seen sitting in his wheel chair watching "NASCAR racing" in the day room. (It is noteworthy that any potential of an

axis two diagnosis stemming from the DSM IV criteria, [i.e., a personality disorder], was not fully investigated).

Mr. W. did eventually agree to partake in the study; although, Mr. W.'s participation is, comparatively speaking, extremely minimal. He also insisted that several descriptors and/or summations of his personal life be excluded in this paper, with the exception of what follows and what has already been mentioned.

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When analyzing the recorded interview conducted with Mr. W., it is initially striking how resistant he is to engage in overtly expressing his life review. He claims that he only agreed to partake in the interview for the sake of having some company. He is extremely cynical about life and, for that matter, any meaning or purpose in life. His resistance and abrasive nature was the most predominant theme throughout the interview.

However, when the interview probed further, a gradual illumination of his engagement in life review did eventually surface. He discussed with the most frequency his disgust with life as it mainly pertained to his unsuccessful career as a race car driver. This was also reflected in magnitude and with solid structuring. Furthermore, the order is noteworthy: he began with discussing his many failed races, he ended with this discussion and throughout entire middle segment of the interview he elaborated on his failure at success in the profession of race car driving.

The potential causes of his perspective of his self-evolution were fairly self-evident in his life review. Firstly, familial influences surfaced as he described how his father was a mechanic and “pit boss” of a successful racing team who always put everything on the line and typically “won-out” in the end (he also depicts his father was a “heavy drinker” and “womanizer”). Moreover, his youngest brother was a very successful race car driver who often took risks: “It was a family thing.” (He then went on to describe what “successful” meant to him within the race car profession. It was during this time, and only during this time, that he became invigorated and his affect brightened somewhat as he described what racing was all about and how: “In order to be considered successful, you have to win at least a few major races. There is nothing like being in that winner’s circle.” He ended his definition of successful racing with stating that he won some minor races, but never, unlike his “baby brother”, did he win “even one big event.”). Secondly, financial influences surfaced, as he stated that he was initially motivated to professionally race largely because of the big purses one could win, and, because he was so poor all of his life, making good money greatly appealed to him. He adds that he had some moderate success at earnings from winnings, sponsorship and product endorsements in a semi-professional circuit, which just fueled his “greed” and led him to believe he could make a “great living” at professional racing. However, he states that he went through four wives, and he doesn’t even speak to his kids anymore because of his severe financial problems from the past. Lastly, personality influences and social forces surfaced, as he stated he loved the adrenaline rush of racing and winning. He added that he did “at least” have an adventurous and exciting life, as he states: “Some people are so afraid of dying that they never truly live.” However, he reported that the social scene of the race car profession

was non-stop, and he often had relationship, financial and familial problems because of his constant drinking and “always having *too* good of a time.” He readily admitted that he did not have the self-discipline to stay away from the “partying” atmosphere/peer pressure, nor to dedicate more time to refining his racing skills, which he stated is the biggest regret and self-defeating behavior in his life.

The consequences of his perspective of his self-evolution, as shown during his briefly revealed life review, are seemingly that it brings him mostly ego despair, with only a shred of ego integrity in that he “at least lived an adventurous and exciting life” (once again, Mr. W’s. life review suggests that ego integrity and ego despair are polar opposites that function on a continuum). He claims that he often spends his time nowadays thinking about his past racing career, and what he would do differently if he could only go back in time. However, he claims that his hindsight has at least made him realize that he did live in accord with what he believes essential in life: excitement and adventure. Hence, he says with *almost* a smile, “I can even sometimes bring myself to watch car racing on TV and kinda relive a little of the excitement.”

Thus, Mr. W. does indicate that he often engages in life review. Mr. W.’s perspective of his self-evolution is seemingly steered by negative familial, financial, social, behavioral and particular personality influences throughout his life. Unfortunately, it appears that Mr. W. has more ego despair than ego integrity. However, it does seem as if his engagement in the life review process revealed, at least in part, that he lived in accord with his ideal self (i.e., a person who believes in an adventurous and exciting life), which



further substantiates that the ideal self and real self are also polar opposites that function on a continuum (not unlike ego integrity versus ego despair). With regard to self-actualizing, Mr. W.'s interview does not reflect any strong evidence of peak performances, and there are only ambiguous notions, at best, of peak experiences. Consequently, Mr. W. is seemingly not actively engaged in self-actualizing. Lastly, Mr. W's life stories are exciting and rich tales full of learned experience and entertainment for the willing and patient listener. (It is noteworthy that due to Mr. W.'s reluctance to fully self-disclose and/or reveal his life review, the data is fairly minimal and, thus, the validity of the results is questionable).

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**Mr. Kirk** (Mr. K.) is a ninety year old widower who currently resides alone at his own home in a small subdivision. Mr. K. is extremely active, mostly with projects that he initiates around his home (i.e., pertaining to general upkeep of his house, his property and his neighbor's mechanical devices that are in need of repair). Reportedly, he has a very mechanical oriented mind, and he is "very" intelligent with vast experience. His neighbors say he can fix anything, and many of the neighbors bring their lawn mowers, bicycles and even cars to his house for repair. Moreover, his closest neighbors say they love to just sit and talk with him because he has so many interesting stories from traveling all over the world as a Pan-Am pilot when he was younger. However, his friends do say that it is difficult to get him to sit still for any length of time because he always is fixing something. Mr. K.'s short term memory shows only extremely mild deficits, and his remote memory is well intact. He is very energetic and upbeat, but he



also is quite pensive and is often trying to figure out something in his mind (usually of a mechanical nature), as he states: "If you don't use it you'll lose it!" (referring to his cognitive ability). He reflects no signs or symptoms of any psychiatric, behavioral and/or psychosocial issues. He has never resided in a nursing home or an assisted living facility. Mr. K appears to an excellent candidate for this research project.

Mr. K. was difficult to interview simply because, as his neighbors stated, he was reluctant to sit still for more than thirty minutes at a time. However, although minimally, he did in fact relay his depiction of his self-evolution, and he revealed that, when he isn't fixing something or thinking about fixing something, he relives his past memories of his time as a pilot for Pan-Am. Thus, he appears engaged in life review, but only to a certain degree.

Mr. K. was born in Ohio and lived there most of his life until he and his wife moved to Florida approximately twenty years ago. He did not say much about the family he was born into, except that he had no siblings and his father was an engineer. Mr. K. went to college in Dayton, Ohio and he received a degree as a mechanical engineer. Upon graduating from college, he was hired by Pan-Am airlines. After ten years of being a mechanic for Pan-am, he wanted to become a pilot. He was successful at becoming a pilot for Pan-Am, and he met his wife of forty years while she was a stewardess. Mr. K. has two sons, one who lives in Boulder, Colorado and another one who lives in Miami,

Florida. His sons visit “every couple of months with my grandchildren.” His wife has been deceased for nearly twenty years, and he has lived virtually alone ever since then.

Mr. K. was not one to elaborate much about anything, particularly if it was of a personal nature. He was more interested in discussing either his daily routine (including what project(s) he was working on for that given day) or specific stories about his past career and travels as a pilot for Pan-Am. He currently resides one block from the beach, and he states that the first thing he does is walk on the beach every morning after breakfast. Then, he comes home and begins working on whatever projects he has for that day. He says that when he breaks for lunch, typically someone comes over and he always finds himself talking about his times as a pilot in one way or another or his project for that day. He claims he was very good at his job because he not only knew how to fly, but he also knew all the mechanical details of how the plane operated. He said he always attended the maintenance meetings and brought up insightful concerns; consequently, he was eventually made chairman of that committee and given a substantial raise. He relays that, after lunch, he will usually take a nap. Upon waking from his nap, he resumes working on whatever projects he has to complete until dark (he also sometimes drives to the hardware stores—he has a brand new Cadillac in immaculate condition, which is garage kept and under a tarp). Then, he states he has dinner, reads the paper and/or his new issue of *Popular Mechanics* (he has a lifetime subscription), gets ready for bed, watches the news before bed and/or reads his “bedside book” (apparently, he has a new book beside his bedside each month that he often reads before falling asleep—he strives to complete the book within one month, and the books are almost always novels about

travelers and/or explorers). He ended the interview with a story about how he and his wife lived in Istanbul, Turkey for several months per Pan-Am's request. He told, with amazing detail, how he was enamored by the Turkish people, history, culture and architecture.

When attempts were made to re-direct Mr. K. to other areas of his life (his children, his wife, friendships, hobbies, etc.), he would only briefly discuss these areas. However, he did say that his wife was an exceptionally beautiful and fun-loving woman, and that he is very proud of his two sons because they are educated and successful. Overall, even though it is obvious that Mr. K. is at least somewhat engaged in life review, it was difficult to have him sit still and expound in detail on any area in his past life, as he appeared more concerned with still living in the present: "I love so very much fixing things—it really makes me feel good, and I love helping people out by fixing their gadgets more than anything!"

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When attempting to analyze Mr. K.'s interview, the first striking observation is his strong preoccupation with fixing things. Not only did he overtly mention this with the most frequency during the interview, but also the actual setting of the interview spoke volumes—he has a picnic table in his garage so that when people visit him he can still work on his project(s). Furthermore, his garage was nothing like what one would expect a ninety year old man's garage would look like. Mr. K's garage seem to have every tool imaginable, and these tools were not just manual tools—there were also band saws, drill presses, electric sanders, chain saws, etc. In addition, he had an immaculate work station

with large vise grips and an enormous table with countless indiscriminate tools, pieces and/or parts. His strong mechanical identity was also reinforced by the relatively high intensity, structure and order of his words when he began discussing the nature of any particular mechanical project he was undertaking (he was almost equal in enthusiasm as a kid in a candy store).

The only other areas of focus Mr. K. relayed about his life more than once or twice and with marked intensity, order and structure pertained to his career and/or travels while working for Pan-Am. He did state that those were the best days of his life, and (when he slows down) he often relives those moments as it “makes him feel good...I was really good at what I did, and I enjoyed it very much” (seemingly reflecting potential peak performances and peak experiences).

When attempting to look at the causes of Mr. K.'s perspective of his self-evolution via an illumination of his life review, a few explanations emerge. First, he mentioned that his father was an engineer; hence, it is likely this had an influence (e.g., potential familial, genetic, and intellectual dynamics) on his primary identity being that of a “mechanical” nature. Second, it appears that he has gained and still gains substantial reinforcement from the behavior of fixing things. In other words, he obtains satisfaction from it and feels that he is partaking in a contributory event that involves concretely “helping out” (i.e., intellectual and emotional reward), he made a successful career out of it (i.e., financial and occupational reward), he met his wife as a result of his career path

(marital/relationship rewards), he was able to fully support his family because of his mechanical ways (familial reward) and he continues to be rewarded with the adornment/praise of all his neighbors when he fixes all of their machinery in need of repair. Lastly, and this is purely speculative, it is possible that a fear of death or non-contribution/meaning continues to fuel him to constantly fix and/or want to fix things. The preceding line of thinking is plausible; particularly when one considers his relative reluctance to sit still and speak of the past (this is explored in the later paragraphs pertaining to Mr. K.). However, this does not seem to fit with his past life seemingly being so fulfilling, and he may simply be (as all of us are to some extent) a creature of habit and cannot stop doing what he has done for most of his life.

When exploring the consequences of Mr. K.'s perspective of his self-evolution and minimal life review, there are two conjectures that emerge. First, it appears that his "mechanical" self-evolution has brought him a life-time of substantial rewards (as mentioned above); thus, this seems to now bring him ego integrity. Second, as this was also previously mentioned, his constant participation may in fact reflect an avoidance tactic so he does not full have to acknowledge his mortality, eventual death, and, ultimately, fully engage in the life review process. If this is the case, it is likely that strong ego defense mechanisms are at work and there is incongruence between his real self and ideal self.

When Mr. K. was asked about his life-span perspective regarding his own self-defeating behaviors, he did have a very difficult time with providing an answer. Finally, after exactly five and a half minutes, he did say: “I don’t know, but my wife use to say that I was often too aloof and preoccupied with whatever I was involved with at the time.” Firstly, the fact that he was not seemingly forthright with himself regarding his own shorting comings/self-defeatism (which, of course, we all possess to some degree or another) suggests that he perhaps is in denial or utilizing some other defense mechanism. Secondly, because he is more concerned with the present and not the past one might speculate that he is/has been using his constant mechanical nature as an avoidance mechanism and he has certain fears that, if faced, would have perhaps guided his self-evolution in another direction. However, upon deeper reflection of the interview itself and Mr. K.’s overall personality, the two preceding claims do not seem to hold water. In other words, Mr. K. truly seems to live in the moment and enjoys doing so, and his intelligence and overall behavior reflects too much insight to indicate that he is neurotic or grossly distorting his own self-evolution. Furthermore, his mind and overall inherent predisposition is seemingly one of a genuinely strongly-oriented mechanical aptitude; consequently, it is *unnatural* for him to often engage in such abstract notions as “self-reflection”, as he is more concrete and logical in his intellectual processing.

Therefore, Mr. K.’s primary perspective of his self-evolution appears, firstly, directly connected to possessing and exhibiting a mechanical aptitude, and secondly, his self is seemingly tied to his career, which includes is mechanical ability, being a pilot, a traveler and a good provider for his family. Furthermore, Mr. K. does appear to have genuine,

objective ego integrity and high congruence between his ideal self and real self. He is also potentially a self-actualizer, throughout his life and to this day—as he seemingly has had and continues to have many peak experiences and performances.

Lastly, Mr. K. does appear engaged in life review; however, not to the extent of the less independent individuals who were previously interviewed (indicating that the life review process itself lies on a continuum). The explanation for this is appears simply that Mr. K. is still living in the present, and he is not lying in bed all day with nothing but excessive time on his hands to reflect on his life. Furthermore, his personality and inherent aptitude are not very conducive for that type of activity. Mr. K.'s past and present life are very rich indeed, and it was a pleasure listening and learning from a man who has and still does live such an active life.



### *Discussions:*

When conducting a (brief) cross-case analysis, several correlations and/or patterns emerged amongst and between the samples of interview respondents. Firstly, every individual appeared engaged in the life review process in a fashion that depicts their perspective of their self-evolution, but clearly in varying degrees. This seemingly substantiates that the life review process operates on a continuum. Furthermore, the respondents who usually reflected a high propensity and/or depth for life review were typically the individuals with the strongest ego integrity, the highest congruence between their real selves and ideal selves, and possessed more evidence of self-actualizing tendencies (this also substantiated that one's ideal versus real self, ego integrity versus ego despair and self-actualizing all operate on continuums to some degree).

Although, the aforementioned observation is primarily applicable for the nursing home participants, but it is not as true for Mr. K. (who is completely independent) and Mr. Z. (who retains most of his independence), respectively. In other words, Mr. K. and Mr. Z, comparatively speaking, reflected lower propensity for life review, but they seemingly had high congruence between the real and ideal self, strong ego integrity, and were likely self-actualizing. The explanation for this is seemingly that those participants who have marked infirmity, and are basically bed ridden, are not as able to do much more than reflect on their past lives, as opposed to those who are still very active and spend most of their time still engaging in their present life.

Moreover, there is seemingly a positive, linear correlation between certain variables—socioeconomic status (including level of education) and personality and/or intellectual typology—and the propensity and/or depth for life review. For example, Mr. K.'s personality and intellectual or cognitive typology seemingly preclude him from a well formed participation in the life review process, and this also appears true to some extent for Ms. L. and Ms. D.—but because of yet even different typologies. Conversely, Mr. Z.'s and Ms. G.'s personality and intellectual typologies appear much more conducive for the type of abstract thinking (and feeling) involved in the life review process, and their in-depth life stories reflected this (although, Mr. Z. does not seem as consistent with engaging in life review as Ms. G, again probably because Ms.G. has more time on her hands to reflect on her past life than Mr. Z. does). Furthermore, the individuals who had a life-time of moderate to high socioeconomic standing also seemed to have high propensity and/or depth for life review. However, as it appeared in Ms. L.'s and Ms. D.'s case, those that had relatively lower socioeconomic standing also have lower propensity and/or depth for life review.

The explanation for all of the correlations listed above is seemingly twofold. First, the current socioeconomic concerns and the current personality/intellectual typologies may make it difficult for certain respondents to fully partake in the life review process. Or, second, certain respondents who have had a lifetime of low socioeconomic standing and/or particular personality/intellectual typologies may have had a life devoid of richness and genuinely living in accord with their inherent abilities and inclinations. Thus, there are not presently as active in the life review process because it is not

rewarding to them, and perhaps brings a certain degree of ego despair. It is also feasible that it is a combination of the two preceding explanations for certain respondents.

In addition, there was also seemingly less physical illness for those that seemed more engaged in the life review process and possess strong ego integrity, as opposed to those somewhat disengaged from the life review process and reflecting relatively low ego integrity or even ego despair. This was clearly the case for Mr. W who had the most medical problems and also reflected ego despair, as well as the most disengagement with the life review process. However, this was simply an observed correlation, and it is difficult in this study to truly determine exact causations.

Another interesting observation pertains to a comparison between the sexes. Without exception, the female participants revealed perspective of self-evolution that were directly tied to their role as a housewife and/or mother, rather than being connected to any type of career or other personal aspiration. However, the men revealed without exception, their primary perspective of their self-evolution being one tied to their careers and/or more personal (self-serving) aspirations. Moreover, all of the men had more formal education, occupational experience and personal fulfillment (i.e., self-serving fulfillment outside that of raising a family), and less religious preoccupation than the woman. However, as these is seemingly the result of generational influences, it would be interesting to see the result of a similar study in approximately fifty to sixty years of females and males in their nineties—with the equal opportunity advancements that have evolved in the last several decades, with more men staying at home and more women going to college/entering the work force—it is likely the results would be quite different.

The preceding results can/should serve as a basis for other studies, of a more quantitative and nomothetic nature, which will allow for more validity and reliability pertaining to the aforementioned results. The validity of the results is potential skewed due to the lack of high objectivity in the interpretation of the data. In other words, the results have been subjectively filtered thorough this writer's own phenomenological experience. The reliability is low simply because of the low numbers of participants used, as well as the sampling techniques used may not have allowed for as much generalizability to all nursing home residents nationwide in this age group, as well as random sampling perhaps could. However, at the very least, the results do suggest that the life span perspective of the self is worthy of more accurate investigation and more serious consideration. Lastly, it is noteworthy that qualitative studies done in this area must have a concern for the participants—it became evident that for some of the respondents the questions asked potentially caused a negative re-framing of their life review; thus, possibly increasing ego despair. Any and al research of this nature must be conducted under the guidance of a licensed mental health professional.

### **Conclusion:**

The life review process is clearly reflected in the results of six qualitative interviews of five institutionalized senior citizens, and one senior citizen living in the community, who are ninety years old or older. Furthermore, the unveiled life review processes do reveal strong depictions of self-evolution, especially as it potentially pertains to certain psychological dynamics: ideal versus real self, ego integrity versus ego despair, self-defeating behaviors and self-actualization. More specifically, those that seemingly have more congruence between the ideal and real self, more ego integrity than ego despair, and exhibit self-actualizing tendencies have the strongest characteristics of engagement in life review. However, there was a noted difference in the type, degree and/or depth of the unveiled life reviews, which was seemingly based on certain variables: gender, religious preoccupation, intellectual typology, personality traits, level of independence/ functioning, health and socioeconomic status (including level of education). Lastly, the results from this study could seemingly serve as a solid basis for more broad-based, nomothetic and quantitative studies, as the rich information contained within the provided life stories is full of potential educational substance for subsequent, relative research and for all living individuals who will eventually go through the life review process.

Unfortunately, in our death avoiding and youth oriented culture, there is still not enough willingness to fully face, let alone thoroughly study, the reality of our finite existence on this planet, as Woody Allen says: “I don’t want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve immortality through not dying” (Allen, cited in Macmillan, 1989, p.15).

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**Geriatric Depression Scale (Short Form)**

Answers indicating depression are highlighted.

Each bold answer counts as 1 point; scores greater than 5 indicate probable depression.

	Yes	No		Yes	No
1. Are you basically satisfied with your life? . . . . .	<b>yes</b>	/ no	9. Do you prefer to stay at home, rather than going out and doing new things? . . . . .	<b>yes</b>	/ no
2. Have you dropped many of your activities and interests? . . . . .	<b>yes</b>	/ no	10. Do you feel you have more problems with memory than most? . . . . .	<b>yes</b>	/ no
3. Do you feel that your life is empty? . . . . .	<b>yes</b>	/ no	11. Do you think it is wonderful to be alive? . . . . .	<b>yes</b>	/ no
4. Do you often get bored? . . . . .	<b>yes</b>	/ no	12. Do you feel pretty worthless the way you are now? . . . . .	<b>yes</b>	/ no
5. Are you in good spirits most of the time? . . . . .	<b>yes</b>	/ no	13. Do you feel full of energy? . . . . .	<b>yes</b>	/ no
6. Are you afraid that something bad is going to happen to you? . . . . .	<b>yes</b>	/ no	14. Do you feel that your situation is hopeless? . . . . .	<b>yes</b>	/ no
7. Do you feel happy most of the time? . . . . .	<b>yes</b>	/ no	15. Do you think that most people are better off than you are? . . . . .	<b>yes</b>	/ no
8. Do you often feel helpless? . . . . .	<b>yes</b>	/ no			

Reprinted with permission from: Sheikh JI, Yesavage JA. Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS): Recent evidence and development of a shorter version. *Clinical Gerontologist* 1986;5:165.

## Appendix B

**Cornell Scale for Depression in Dementia**

Rating should be based on symptoms and signs occurring during the week before interview.

No score should be given if symptoms result from physical disability or illness.

**Scoring system:** a=Unable to evaluate 0=Absent 1=Mild to intermittent 2=Severe**A. Mood-Related Signs**

a	0	1	2	1. Anxiety: anxious expression, rumination, worrying
a	0	1	2	2. Sadness: sad expression, sad voice, tearfulness
a	0	1	2	3. Lack of reaction to present events
a	0	1	2	4. Irritability: annoyed, short tempered

**B. Behavioral Disturbance**

a	0	1	2	5. Agitation: restlessness, hand wringing, hair pulling
a	0	1	2	6. Retardation: slow movements, slow speech, slow reactions
a	0	1	2	7. Multiple physical complaints (score 0 if gastrointestinal symptoms only)
a	0	1	2	8. Loss of interest: less involved in usual activities (score only if change occurred acutely, i.e., in less than one month)

**C. Physical Signs**

a	0	1	2	9. Appetite loss: eating less than usual
a	0	1	2	10. Weight loss (score 2 if greater than 5 pounds in one month)
a	0	1	2	11. Lack of energy: fatigues easily, unable to sustain activities

**D. Cyclic Functions**

a	0	1	2	12. Diurnal variation of mood: symptoms worse in the morning
a	0	1	2	13. Difficulty falling asleep: later than usual for this individual
a	0	1	2	14. Multiple awakening during sleep
a	0	1	2	15. Early morning awakening: earlier than usual for this individual

**E. Ideational Disturbance**

a	0	1	2	16. Suicidal: feels life is not worth living
a	0	1	2	17. Poor self-esteem: self-blame, self-depreciation, feeling of failure
a	0	1	2	18. Pessimism: anticipation of the worst
a	0	1	2	19. Mood congruent delusions: delusions of poverty, illness or loss

**SCORE** \_\_\_\_ Score greater than 12 is Probable Depression

Reprinted with permission from: Alexopoulos GS, Abrams RC, Young RC, Shamoian CA. Cornell Scale for Depression in Dementia. *Biol Psychiatry* 1988 Feb 1 23:3 271-84

Appendix C:

## **Informed Consent For Research** **Participation**

This research is being conducted to investigate the psychological, sociological, philosophical and cultural dynamics of the “life review” process, which has been theorized that most (if not all) elderly people experience. This study is an attempt to explore the evolution and development of the self, as seen in hindsight through the eyes of the elderly, including a life span perspective on self-defeating behaviors. Furthermore, the data collected for analysis in this study will be gained via individually interviewing approximately a dozen, aged individuals (80 years of age or older, male and female). Each participant interviewed may exercise his or her right to decline any inquiry posed at any time.

I have been thoroughly informed of the nature of the study to which I agree to be a participant. I understand what to generally expect throughout the course of my participation in this study, and the many potential, relevant outcomes subsequent to the study. I further understand that my privacy is protected by the omission of my real name and the altering of some minor details regarding my circumstances, history, and overall status. I give full permission for the researcher to record any and all dialogue to which I partake. Moreover, I understand a copy of the final draft of the study will be provided to me before it is released for any sort of public display, and, at that time, I reserve the right to withdraw any or all of my contribution to this research project. I also will not hold this facility (i.e., Mariner Health of St. Augustine [a nursing home]) and/or the researcher (Mark A. Zappone) accountable in any fashion for any outcome relating to my participation in this research project. Lastly, I solemnly swear to speak honestly and completely with every question I decide to answer.

---

Participant's Signature

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Witness's Signature

Appendix D:

**Sample of the Type of Questions Regarding  
Life Review Process For Interviewing—a  
jumping-off point for in-depth, semi-informal  
and open-ended responses (cassette recorder  
and/or videorecorder utilized to record open-  
ended answers):**

1. What is your full name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your birth date?
4. Where were you born?
5. What religion were you raised under, and how seriously did you/do you follow any particular religion?
6. How does that make you feel?
7. Do you find yourself often thinking about your religious practices that you were involved in throughout the years?
8. Do you think about religion more now than you use to when you were younger?
9. What about your self, if anything, stood in the way of you pursuing your religious obligations?
10. What was the make-up of your nuclear family that you were born into, and for how long?
11. How important is/was family to you?
12. Do you think more about family now than when you were younger?
13. What about yourself, if anything, do you feel prevented you from fulfilling your familial goals?
14. What mostly occupies your time nowadays?
15. What is your marital status?
16. How important is marriage to you?
17. Are you satisfied with your marital or relationship status/history?
18. Do you find yourself thinking more about your relationship history now as opposed to when you were younger?
19. What about yourself, if anything, stood in the way of your marital success?
20. How many children do you have?
21. Do you have a good relationship with your children?
22. How does that make you feel?
23. Do you find yourself thinking more about your relationship with your children now, than when you were younger?



24. What about your self, if anything, stood on the way of you having children or having the relationship you wanted with your children?
25. What occupations have you had in your lifetime?
26. How important is/was your career to you?
27. Do you often reflect with pride or disgrace regarding your past career path?
28. Did you think that much about your career when you were younger, as compared to now?
29. What about your self, if anything, stood in the way of your career goals?
30. Do you work or volunteer currently?
31. Have you ever had any ailments (physical, mental, or spiritual)?
32. How important is health to you?
33. Do you find yourself thinking your health more now than when you were younger?
34. What about your self, if anything, stood in the way of you having optimal health?
35. How many years education do you have?
36. How important to you is your ethnic background?
37. Do you find that you put more thought into your ethnic background now than when you were younger?
38. How important is/was education to you?
39. Are you satisfied with how much education you have obtained?
40. Do you find that you often think about what you would have maybe done differently, in the way of education, nowadays?
41. What about your self, if anything, stood in the way of your educational goals?
42. How much money did you/ do you make?
43. How important is financial success to you?
44. Do you find that you now often think about what you might have done differently when you were younger in your pursuit of financial success?
45. What, if anything, about yourself stood in the way of your financial success?
46. How many close friends have you/do you have?
47. How important is friendship to you?
48. What about yourself, if anything, stood in the way of you having more friendships?
49. What is the most important thing to you in life?
50. Do you feel that you have lived in line with what is most important to you in life?
51. If not, why not?
52. Do you find yourself, now that you are retired, often reflecting on your past and thinking of whether or not you are pleased with how you lived your life?
53. What are/were some of the general behaviors that have prevented you from reaching some of the goals that you wanted to achieve?
54. Are you happy?
55. Have you lived a mostly happy life?
56. If not, why not?
57. How do you define a happy life?
58. How do you define a good life?
59. Is/was morality important to you?

60. Do you feel that for most of your life you have been a moral person, and do you think that you think about this more now than when you were younger?
61. What about your self, if anything, has prevented you from living a moral life?
62. If you were/ are a parent, do you feel that you have been a good parent?
63. How important to you is it to be a good parent? What about yourself, if anything, prevented you from being a good parent?
64. Do you have a good relationship with your siblings?
65. Do you found yourself often thinking of the relationship you have/had with your siblings (or even extended family members)?
66. How does that make you feel?
67. What about yourself, if anything, has prevented you from a good relationship with your siblings/extended family?
68. Did you have a god relationship with your parents most of their life?
69. How does that make you feel?
70. Do you find yourself often thinking of the relationship you had with your parents?
71. What about your self, if anything, has prevented you from having a good relationship with your parents?
72. What is your political affiliation?
73. Are you happy with your political decisions throughout your life?
74. Do you think about this more now than when you were younger?
75. Do you find that you have more philosophical / religious/spiritual questions nowadays as compared to when you were younger?
76. Are you satisfied with how religious/philosophical/spiritual you have been throughout your life? What, if anything, about your self prevented this?
77. What are/were some things that you are most proud of in life?
78. What are the things that you are most not so proud of in your life?
79. If you could go back into your youth and change some things, wehat would they be?
80. And do you find that you have thought of this more so while you have been in retirement as opposed to when you were younger?
81. How do you feel about the places you have lived in your life?
82. Do you find that you think more now about the places that you live than when you were younger?
83. What, if anything, about yourself prevented you form living where you wanted to live?
84. Overall, do you think you are more nostalgic now than you were when you were younger?
85. Are there certain causes or "fights" that you wish you stood for when you were younger, and do you find yourself thinking about that more now than when you were younger?
86. What, if anything, about your self prevented this?
87. Are there certain places you wish you were able to see or travel to when you were younger?
88. What about your self, if anything, prevented this?
89. Do you find that you think about that more now than when you were in your youth?

90. Are there certain skills you wished you learned when you were younger? What about your self, if anything, prevented this?
91. Do you find that you think about that more now than when you were younger?
92. What were the strongest self-defeating behaviors you encountered throughout your life?
93. Do you realize that more now than when you were younger?
94. Do you believe in the old adage that hindsight is 20/20?
95. Are you lonely at present?
96. Were you alone most of your life? If so, why?
97. What is your favorite thing to do in life?
98. Have you been able to do this most of your life? If not, why not?
99. And, what was it when you were younger?

\* For most of the following questions, another question will be asked: "What about your self, if anything, prevented that?"

100. Do you have pets?
101. Did you have pets when you were younger?
102. What is your favorite food in life, and what was it when you were younger?
103. Do you have hobbies, and what was your favorite hobbies when you were younger?
104. \*The self can be reflected in one's
105. What is your favorite thing to do in life?
106. And, what was it when you were younger?
107. What is your favorite food in life, and what was it when you were younger?
108. Do you have pets?
109. Did you have pets when you were younger?
110. Do you have hobbies, and what was your favorite hobbies when you were younger?
111. What would you say is your socioeconomic status, and what has it been through the various stages of your life?
112. How do you feel about that?
113. And, do you find that you think about that more in your golden years as opposed to when you are younger?
114. Are you happy with where you have lived for most of your life?
115. Would you say you lived in good neighbor hoods?
116. How would you define a good neighbor hood?
117. Do you find yourself reflecting on where you lived now more so than when you were younger?
118. Are you mostly satisfied with your appearance throughout your life?
119. Do you find yourself thinking about your appearance more now than when you were younger?
120. Do you care what others think of you?
121. Do you care more now that you are older about what others think of you?
122. Are you involved in sports or athletics?

123. Do you wish you were more involved with sports or athletics when you were younger? Do you find that you often think about this now that you're older? Do you/did you use drugs, alcohol and/or tobacco—do you wish you did?
124. Do you have many regrets?
125. Do you have much guilt over things in the past?
126. If there were certain things you could do go back and change—what would they be?
127. Do you often think, "If only that or this didn't happen"?
128. Do you ever wish certain aspects of your personality were different?
129. Do you ever wish you had more friends and/or kept in contact with certain friends?
130. How was your relationship with your parents? Do you wish certain things were different with regard to your relationship with your parents?
131. Please tell me more about your religious history?
132. Please tell me about how you have viewed your personality throughout your life?
133. Please tell me how you have viewed your physical appearance/physique for most of your life?
134. What are you thinking about now and most of the time?
135. What do you think of this interview?

Appendix E:

## MINI-MENTAL STATE EXAMINATION

M.F. Folstein, 1983

Patient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Administered: \_\_\_\_\_

Maximum Score	Score	
		<b>Orientation</b>
5		What is the (year) (season) (date) (day) (month)?
5		Where are we: (state) (country) (town) (hospital) (floor)?
		<b>Registration</b>
3		Name three objects: 1 second to say each. Then ask the patient all three after you have said them. Give one point for each correct answer. Then repeat them until he learns all three. Count trials and record.  Trials:
		<b>Attention and Calculation</b>
5		Serial 7's. One point for each correct. Stop after 5 answers. Alternatively, spell "world" backwards.
		<b>Recall</b>
3		Ask for three objects repeated above. Give 1 point for each correct.
		<b>Language</b>
		Name a pencil and a watch. (2 points)
		Repeat the following: "No ifs, ands, or buts."
		Follow a three-stage command: Take a paper in your right hand, fold it in half, and put it on the floor. (3 points)
		Read and obey the following: "Close your eyes." (1 point)
		Write a sentence. (1 point)
9		Copy a design. (1 point)
30		/30

TOTAL SCORE

24/30 = Cutoff

Appendix F:**MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES SYMPTOM CHECKLIST**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Facility: \_\_\_\_\_

Facility Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

The following individual is recommended for possible mental health services:

Patient: \_\_\_\_\_ Room# \_\_\_\_\_

DOCTOR ORDER:	NAME: _____
	DATE: _____
FAMILY APPROVAL:	NAME: _____
	DATE: _____

**PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS**

- ☐ Agitation / Anxiety
- ☐ Anger
- ☐ Depression: mild / moderate / severe
- ☐ Hallucinations / Delusions
- ☐ Hopelessness
- ☐ Hypochondriasis
- ☐ Insomnia
- ☐ Loss of Appetite
- ☐ Mood swings
- ☐ Obsessive / Compulsive patterns
- ☐ Over dependence on Medications
- ☐ Paranoia
- ☐ Poor adjustment to illness
- ☐ Poor adjustment to facility
- ☐ Poor self-esteem
- ☐ Poor social / family adjustment
- ☐ Suicidal ideation
- ☐ Unreasonable fears
- ☐ Withdrawal
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**PROBLEM BEHAVIORS**

- ☐ Agitation / Anxiety
- ☐ Spitting
- ☐ Biting / Scratching
- ☐ Catastrophic / Panic reactions
- ☐ Crying
- ☐ Cursing
- ☐ Disoriented to time / place / person
- ☐ Disrobing
- ☐ Eating Problems
- ☐ Emotional Lability
- ☐ Excessively Demanding
- ☐ Hitting / Kicking
- ☐ Inappropriate Sexual Behavior
- ☐ Purposeful Incontinence
- ☐ Perseveration
- ☐ Repetitious Behavior
- ☐ Resistance to Bathing
- ☐ Resistance to Dressing
- ☐ Resistance to Medication(s)
- ☐ Resistance to other treatments
- ☐ Self-abuse

**Appendix G:**

**Erikson's Eight Psycho-social Stages of Development (Stevens, 19583, p.43-53):**

- 1. Basic trust versus mistrust.**
- 2. Autonomy versus shame and doubt.**
- 3. Initiative versus guilt.**
- 4. Industry versus inferiority.**
- 5. Identity versus role confusion.**
- 6. Intimacy versus isolation.**
- 7. Generativity versus stagnation.**
- 8. Ego integrity versus ego despair.**